Thursday
5 September 2024
£3.00
From £2.30 for subscribers

The Guardian

News provider of the year



'The neglect has been laid bare. Now is the time for justice'

→ Journal, page 1

Grenfell: a disaster caused by 'dishonesty and greed'

- Long-awaited public inquiry report finds all 72 deaths in tragedy at tower were avoidable
- Starmer apologises and police come under pressure to accelerate criminal investigation
- Families of victims say report proves many firms were 'little better than crooks and killers'

Robert Booth
Emine Sinmaz

Police are under pressure to accelerate the criminal investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire after an excoriating report found companies operated with "systematic dishonesty" and that all 72 deaths were avoidable.

A seven-year public inquiry culminated yesterday in a report that laid bare "decades of failure" by central government and egregious behaviour by a string of multimillion-dollar firms involved in the tower's disastrous refurbishment.

Sir Martin Moore-Bick, who led the inquiry, found that firms which made the combustible materials used on the tower – Arconic, Celotex and Kingspan – "engaged in deliberate and sustained strategies to … mislead the market".

He identified incompetence, "cavalier" attitudes and "concealment" of wrongdoing, while Grenfell residents' safety concerns were dismissed by their local authority and the landlord of the west London building they called home.

After the publication of the long-awaited findings, Natasha Elcock, the chair of the families' group Grenfell United, sent a message to the Metropolitan police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), saying: "It is now on to you to deliver justice."

Speaking in the Commons, the prime minister, Keir Starmer, issued "an apology on behalf of the British state" and said the report had prompted "a renewed determination to ensure that justice is delivered". He pledged to "give all support and resource that's necessary".

The London mayor, Sadiq Khan, said: "Those responsible must now be immediately held to account," while the local MP, Joe Powell, said with "no charges and no arrests … the government and the police must now do everything in their power to bring those responsible to justice using the full force of the law".

But the Met's deputy assistant commissioner, Stuart Cundy, immediately pleaded for patience, saying it would take a further 12 to 18 months to examine the inquiry report "line by line" before files could be sent to the CPS to weigh possible charges.

More than 180 police officers are investigating 58 suspected individuals and 19 companies, with potential charges including corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, fraud and misconduct in public office.

There was a reminder of the severe human cost of the disaster as Moore-Bick, a former judge who opened the inquiry after the blaze in 2017, addressed bereaved and survivors gathered at the west London inquiry room before reading out the names of the 72 people who died, including six members of the Choucair family and five from the El-Wahabi family.

The clarity of the inquiry's conclusions reignited frustration among some bereaved and survivors that the police had chosen to await the conclusions of the inquiry before considering charges.

Hisam Choucair, who lost his mother, his sister, her husband and their three daughters, told a press conference the inquiry had prevented prosecutions from being brought and "it has delayed the justice my family deserves".

In 2019, the Met said it would submit prosecution files by "the latter part of 2021". Now that looks unlikely to happen until 2026, and no trials are expected before 2027 – a decade after the fire.

In the short term, Starmer said the government would "write to all companies found by the inquiry to be part of these horrific failings as the first step to stopping them being awarded government contracts".

Yesterday Grenfell United said the inquiry had proved its claim that many firms involved were "little better than crooks and killers".

The 1,700-page report also criticised failures by successive governments to halt the

6 →



▲ *72 people died in the Grenfell disaster. Pictures of some of those killed have never been made public*
PHOTOGRAPH: PA MEDIA

Inside

36
9 770261 307347

Contact
For missing sections please fill out the form at **www.theguardian.com/missingsections** or call **0800 839 100**.
For individual departments, call the Guardian switchboard: **020 3353 2000**.
For the Readers' editor (corrections & clarifications on specific editorial content), call **020 3353 4736** to leave a voice message, or email **guardian.readers@theguardian.com**.
Letters for publication should be sent to **guardian.letters@theguardian.com** or the address on the letters page.

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2023 was 45.5%

Guardian News & Media, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU. 020-3353 2000. Fax 020-7837 2114. In Manchester: Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR. Telephone Sales: 020-7611 9000. The Guardian lists links to third-party websites, but does not endorse them or guarantee their authenticity or accuracy. Back issues sold and provided by Historic Newspapers: www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/old-newspapers/guardian. Published by Guardian News & Media, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, and at Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR. Printed at Reach Watford Limited, St Albans Road, Watford, Herts WD24 7RG; Reach Oldham Limited, Hollinwood Avenue, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8EP; Reach Saltire Ltd, 110 Fifty Pitches Place, Glasgow G51 4EA; and by Irish Times Print Facility, 4080 Kingswood Road, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24. No. 55,380, Thursday 5 September 2024. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office ISSN 0261-3077.

News



◀ *People at Warleigh weir on the River Avon. Campaigners say the proposed legislation does not do enough to tackle water firms' polluting of waterways*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW LLOYD/ALAMY

Water bosses could face prison for sewage dumping under planned law

Helena Horton
Environment reporter

Water bosses in England and Wales could be jailed for up to two years for covering up sewage dumping under proposed legislation.

At the moment, chief executives of water companies face fines for failing to comply with investigations by the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate, but there have been just three such fines since privatisation three decades ago.

Civil servants at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said yesterday they planned to tighten rules to force companies to hand over sewage data quickly, and that the maximum sentence for covering up this information or failing to release it would be two years.

Ministers also plan to pass legislation that would force water companies to pay the EA and DWI's enforcement costs if they are under investigation. The EA has found it hard to inspect polluters owing to funding cuts, so ministers hope this would provide the money to increase the number of prosecutions. Defra has been looking for savings after the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, asked it for £1bn in spending reductions.

The legislation being introduced to parliament today would also give the regulators powers to ban bonuses for water company bosses who fail to meet environmental and consumer standards, and if their company is not financially resilient. These environmental standards had not yet been decided by the regulator, Ofwat.

Last year, Liv Garfield of Severn Trent took a £584,000 bonus despite her company having been fined £2m for "recklessly" dumping sewage, and the firm scored highly on the EA's environment rankings despite taking this human waste spillage into account.

The environment secretary, Steve Reed, said: "Under this government, water executives will no longer line their own pockets whilst pumping out this filth. If they refuse to comply, they could end up in the dock and face prison time. This bill is a major step forward in our wider reform to fix the broken water system. We will outline further legislation to fundamentally transform how the water industry is run and speed up the delivery of upgrades to our sewage infrastructure to clean up our waterways for good."

Campaigners and experts said the announcement did not go far enough, and that the whole system needed to change. The sewage campaigner and former Undertones frontman Feargal Sharkey said he was still planning to march on parliament next month and viewed the measures as inadequate.

He said: "I have called for a mass protest for a coalition of the concerned to ensure clean, healthy rivers. We need transformational information and action. I see none of that before me. We will still be marching on 26 October to demand clean rivers and strong action."

Guy Linley-Adams, a solicitor for the charity WildFish, said the government was not using existing powers to force the regulators to crack down on polluting water companies.

Linley-Adams said ministers could remove the "growth duty" from regulators, which prioritises economic growth over the environment, without new legislation.

"If the new government really means what it says, that it will not tolerate poor performance across the water sector, then it can start now by issuing new and unambiguous policy steers to Ofwat and the EA right now that force a much tougher financial and environmental regulatory approach, one that prioritises investment in the environment," he said.

"The government should also disapply the regulators' code and the statutory growth duty that currently shackle both the EA and Ofwat's regulation of the water companies. And they should direct the EA to stop using soft-touch enforcement undertakings for water company offending and always prosecute water companies aggressively for causing pollution. None of the above requires new law. It can all be done right now."

Charles Watson, the chair and founder of the campaign group River Action, said: "If the secretary of state believes that the few one-off actions announced today, such as curtailing bosses' bonuses – however appealing they may sound – are going to fix the underlying causes of our poisoned waterways, then he needs to think again.

"Only a comprehensive and holistic review focusing on all sources of pollution and that delivers a transformational action plan, with tangible targets and milestones, can reform our failed regulatory system and end the daily polluting of our rivers, lakes and seas," said Watson.

Woman, 86, gets reprieve over £13,000 benefit debt

Josh Halliday
North of England editor

An 86-year-old woman with advanced dementia has been told by the government she no longer has to repay a £13,000 benefit debt after her case was highlighted by the Guardian.

Sia Kasparis, who is partially blind and has been bedbound for two years, was ordered to repay the huge sum after officials said she had failed to notify them that her son had taken up caring duties.

However, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would have known this because her son, Andrew Kasparis, had begun claiming carer's allowance. Kasparis, 66, said it would have been "virtually impossible" for his mother to contact the DWP because of her serious health problems – of which the department was aware – and because English is not her first language.

Her case was highlighted as part of a Guardian investigation that revealed tens of thousands of unpaid carers were repaying more than £250m in overpayments that in many cases had been allowed to accumulate because of years of DWP administrative failures.

Kasparis, who suffers from vascular dementia, heart failure and kidney disease, fell foul of a slightly different aspect of the complicated rules around carer's allowance, a £81.90-a-week benefit paid to nearly 1 million people who give up full-time work to look after loved ones.

The DWP say the grandmother of five should have notified it that her son had taken up caring duties for her in December 2019, when he began receiving an extra £50 a week on his universal credit to provide his mother with round-the-clock care. From this point, Kasparis was no longer eligible for the severe disability premium of pension credit she had been receiving.

Yet given her worsening health – she was soon after diagnosed with vascular dementia – she failed to notify the DWP and was told this year that she owed £12.855.54 in overpayments dating back to December 2019.

At a repayment rate of £51 a month, the DWP would have been clawing the money back until 2034 – when Kasparis would be 106.

However, the DWP confirmed to her son this week that the debt had been waived on behalf of the new pensions secretary, Liz Kendall.

> *'She would not have stopped worrying about it. As a family it's just a huge relief that it's all over'*
> **Andrew Kasparis**
> *Sia's son and carer*

A letter from the DWP said: "In respect of Mrs Kasparis' pension credit overpayment, an officer acting on behalf of the secretary of state has carefully considered the case and I confirm our decision to waive the outstanding balance of £12,855.54."

Kasparis said he had not been able to tell his mother about the debt because it would have been "catastrophic" for her.

"She would not have stopped worrying about it. As a family it's just a huge relief that it's all over," he said.

Kasparis, who lives with his mother, noted there was "no hint of apology" in the government letter but that he had not expected one. "I've got a feeling that's because they don't want to admit any sort of liability."

He urged Kendall to change the rules requiring the claimant of the severe disability premium of pension credit to alert the DWP to changes the department is already aware of.

A DWP spokesperson said: "We are sorry for any distress caused to Mr Kasparis and his mother."

GB roll on as Storey wins an 18th gold in nine Games

Paul MacInnes
Clichy-sous-Bois, Paris

Dame Sarah Storey continued her historic pursuit of gold upon gold yesterday, claiming her 18th Paralympic victory over nine Games by winning the women's C5 time trial and immediately turning her attention to the hunt for more.

On a day in which Britain's women cyclists lived up to high expectations, and the men collectively disappointed, Storey also joined the chorus of voices calling for a renewed focus on delivering social change for people with disabilities.

Storey won the time trial by 4.69 seconds from Heïdi Gaugain of France, her fifth consecutive title in the event, in a race that began just after sunrise in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois.

Only a curtailed course, cut in half to accommodate medal ceremonies much to Storey's chagrin, prevented a more dominant victory.

"This is the shortest Paralympic time trial we've ever had and I think it's a real shame because you don't get to showcase para-sport in the way that you want to," she said after the race. "I'm very happy. I'm over the moon. But I know that there's always ways to improve things. Now we've got to do the road race on Friday.

"I know that my family were there at the start. I've got friends from work who are here. Family have come out, former teammates have come out and people who used to work at British Cycling. There's so many people that I'm looking forward to seeing. But I've never got up for a cycling final when it's dark. So I guess that my days as a swimmer have paid off."



▼ *Sarah Storey celebrates victory in her C5 time trial yesterday, her 18th Paralympic gold over nine Games* PHOTOGRAPH: ED SYKES/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



▲ *Storey, then Bailey, competing in the pool at the 2000 Sydney Paralympics* PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN GARNSWORTHY/GETTY



▲ *Storey at London 2012. She had switched to cycling at the 2008 Games* PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Britain's most successful Paralympian shared her thoughts on the debate about accessibility and inclusion that has surrounded events in Paris, prompted in part by an incident involving another dame, Tanni Grey-Thompson, who was forced to abandon her wheelchair and crawl off a train owing to a lack of assistance at London King's Cross station in the run-up to the Games.

"I said before London 2012 that we were expecting too much of a Paralympics to change society in one fell swoop and we didn't. Tanni's situation the other day showed that," Storey said. "You can see that the legacy of sport is amazing, but the legacy for society is still the thing we have to work on.

"It's great to see the sporting legacy, with the 31 golds the team has got, including me, and what's happened in sport can be a metaphor for what could happen in the rest of society. We've been given our opportunities to thrive, and we do. If you give every disabled person the opportunity to thrive, they will."

Storey serves as the active travel commissioner for Greater Manchester and says she constantly encounters the small failings that make great differences to the daily lives of disabled people.

"I have my job in transport, and I'm constantly saying: 'Have you checked that the signed route is step-free? Will you make sure that the signed route is definitely step-free? Because there's nothing worse than someone rolling up to set steps, and going: 'Oh, you could have signed it and said it wasn't step-free, this is the way I need to go.'

'The legacy of sport is amazing, but the legacy for society is the thing we have to work on'

Dame Sarah Storey



"I think with technology, we could have automated systems that would know when a wheelchair user's on a train," Storey went on. "The lack of spontaneity for travel for people with disabilities needs to change."

Clichy-sous-Bois is an unlikely host for the para-cycling road races, at least in comparison to the many picture-postcard venues that have made up Paris 2024. Site of the unrest which ignited the notorious riots of 2005, it has remained a neighbourhood entrenched in poverty. But on a sunny midweek afternoon locals lined the streets to watch the races and, particularly, the medal ceremonies which were held in public at the heart of the neighbourhood.

The locals got to see British women take the podium on three further occasions as ParalympicsGB held on to their second place in the overall medals table, behind China but in front of a USA team that are gathering momentum as the Games progress.

Storey was joined in time-trial success by three other female para-athletes, two of whom compete in the visually impaired classifications and race with sighted pilots. Fran Brown won silver in the C1-3 class, while Lora Fachie and Corrine Hall won bronze and Sophie Unwin and Jenny Holl silver in the B classification. All six male racers, including three gold medal hopes in the men's C3 race, failed to make the podium, however.

Unwin exemplifies the grit required to succeed in a second event after Britain's dominant performance on the track earlier this week. Only taking up competitive cycling during the pandemic, she made the British team for Tokyo and brought back two medals. This time she has three, one of each colour, and said her improvement in the time trial was down to having learned how to dig deep.

"In Tokyo, I was so new to it, I didn't know how to pace an effort, I didn't know how to hurt myself in a time trial," she said after completing the 28km race and subsequently suffering a bout of nausea.

"I definitely know how to do that now. I don't even know [how I manage it] I think a lot of it is I don't want to let Jenny down, and I know Jenny has a much harder job than me on the bike. My job is just to put out power. I've got to do that as best I can until I literally can't any more."

Queen guitarist May reveals he had minor stroke but can still play

Geneva Abdul

The Queen guitarist Brian May revealed yesterday he recently had a minor stroke that resulted in his being unable to use his left arm.

May said he had experienced a "health hiccup" last week, but he reassured his fans he was recovering and able to play again after having been temporarily unable to control his arm.



▲ *Brian May told his fans he had briefly lost the use of his left arm*

"The good news is that I can play guitar," May said in a video shared on his website. "It was in some doubt because that little health hiccup that I mentioned happened about a week ago, and what they called it was a minor stroke and all of a sudden, out of the blue, I didn't have any control over this arm, so it was a little scary.

"I have to say I had the most fantastic care and attention from Frimley hospital, where I went blue lights flashing … the lot. Very exciting!

May said he was resting, unable to drive or fly. "Just doing what I'm told, which is basically nothing. I'm grounded. I'm not allowed to go out. Well, I'm not allowed to drive, not allowed to get on a plane, not allowed to raise the heart rate too high … but I'm good."

May added: "I really don't want sympathy. "Please don't do that because it will clutter up my inbox and I hate that."

The disclosure came weeks after the documentary Brian May: The Badgers, the Farmers and Me aired on BBC Two, about his campaign to end the culling of badgers.

According to the Badger Trust charity, more than 230,000 have been killed in England in the past decade based on the government's belief that badgers are responsible for the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB), which requires the slaughter of any infected cattle – about 20,000 a year. Tackling the spread of bTB costs the taxpayer about £100m a year.

The mass culls since 2013 have not been without controversy. There is no scientific consensus on whether it has reduced bTB. Several studies have found it had no positive impact, and a recent study found a large-scale vaccination programme could help eradicate bTB in badgers.

Last week the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced that the culling of badgers in England would end in 2029.

Police clear refugee camp near Calais used by victims of tragedy in Channel

Daniel Boffey
Diane Taylor
Angelique Chrisafis

French police yesterday cleared a camp believed to have been used by some of the dozen people, including six children, who died after their dinghy ripped apart in the Channel.

Belongings and tents were removed and tens of people were bussed away from an unofficial refugee settlement near Calais known locally as the "BMX site".

Six children and a pregnant woman were among 12 people who died on Tuesday three miles off Cap Gris-Nez, south of Calais, when a flimsy dinghy in which 65 people were being transported collapsed in the water. Of the dead, 10 were female.

It has emerged that moments before the collapse of the dinghy 15 people had been safely moved on to a rescue boat after calling for help but the majority had chosen to go on.

French prosecutors have said that many of those caught up in the tragedy originated from the north-east African state of Eritrea, which is one of the poorest countries in the world.

The French government has a "no fixation" policy that is designed to deter people seeking to cross to the UK from living in camps by the coast, and diggers and riot police were mobilised early yesterday morning to clear a site where Eritreans had been staying.

Charities working with migrants in northern France said those who had lost possessions in the clearout had included survivors of Tuesday's sinking, though this could not be independently verified.

Despite the latest loss of life in the Channel, dozens more people could be seen risking their lives yesterday, including on a heavily laden vessel that set off from nearby Wimereux under the watch of patrol boats. The dinghy was so overcrowded the legs of some onboard could be seen to be dragging in the water.

A young girl grasping a mobile phone but not wearing a lifejacket was among them. Asked why it did not intervene, the French maritime agency said it would be dangerous to force such vessels back to shore.

A spokesperson said: "It's difficult to achieve with more than 50 people onboard who are vehemently refusing to be rescued. The main risk is a stampede onboard and then a capsizing, these boats being neither stable nor reliable.

"The risk of loss of human life being too high for an intervention under duress, the choice is made to prioritise the protection of the people onboard, and by simply monitoring from a distance the navigation capabilities of these boats. It is therefore more a question of ethics than of blind application of the law."

Later yesterday about 100 people were seen disembarking at the port of Dover after three dinghies were intercepted by the UK Border Force vessels Typhoon and Defender.

Jean-Luc Dubaële, the mayor of Wimereux, told Agence France-Presse that the British and French authorities could no longer let the situation continue.

He said: "Unfortunately, every day is like this for us. The smugglers – a criminal network – continue with insistence to send people to their deaths in the Channel. It really is unacceptable, scandalous. And it is high time that a lasting solution is found with Britain."

'It is shameful'

French town demands action after drownings



▶ *People set off in a crammed dinghy from a beach north of Boulogne-sur-Mer yesterday in an attempt to reach England*
PHOTOGRAPH: BENOIT TESSIER/REUTERS

Angelique Chrisafis
Le Portel and Boulogne-sur-Mer

The local fishing crews had been finishing their long night's work catching lobster and crab off the northern French port of Boulogne-sur-Mer when the mayday alert came in.

Axel Baheu and Gaëtan Baillet immediately rushed their boats to assist in the rescue operation. A small inflatable dinghy had ripped apart in the Channel with at least 60 people, mostly from Eritrea, on board, hoping to reach England. What the fishers saw would haunt them for ever, they said.

Twelve people died in the disaster on Tuesday; at least half of them were under 18, and 10 were women. Baheu, in his lobster boat, the Murex, pulled three bodies from the water. He told the Voix du Nord newspaper how his crew had wept as they had pulled in the casualties and seen their inadequate safety precautions.

One girl, who Baheu estimated was aged between 15 and 20, had carefully placed her phone in a plastic wallet, firmly secured around her neck. The phone continued to ring as her body was brought to shore. Only eight out of the 60 or more people on board had been wearing lifejackets.

Baillet, who had never pulled a body from the water before, said the dinghy was going down rapidly: "Only a little bit at the back was left, the rest was sinking."

The tragedy, off Cap Gris-Nez, north of Boulogne-sur-Mer, was the deadliest such incident since 27 people died off Calais in November 2021. The location of the sinking shows how traffickers are responding to high security in Calais by encouraging people to board boats farther along the coast – increasing the risks because the boats have farther to travel to reach the coast of England.

Le Portel is a classic northern seaside town of 10,000 people adjoining Boulogne-sur-Mer. It has a stunning shoreline, traditional beach huts and a fish processing port. On Tuesday, it set up a medical rescue station as the survivors and the dead were brought ashore. Only a few years ago, the popular tourist spot had never seen people fleeing countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East attempting to get to England. But now there are such regular attempts to set sail here that dog walkers often find piles of clothes by the shore after a boat has left, or even witness groups of people on the beach boarding dinghies.

It was mid-afternoon on Tuesday when Cédric Toupet, 44, a funeral director in Boulogne-sur-Mer, received the call to go to Le Portel. The 12 bodies lay under white sheets on the quay. Toupet was asked to take the deceased to hospital for medical and legal examination. "It is terribly sad," he said. "One person's death would be a tragedy. Twelve people dying is extremely difficult. There are a growing number of these tragedies. These are people who have very difficult, precarious lives, who leave countries at war, often with their families. They are looking for a better life, which unfortunately no one is offering them."

At the beach in Le Portel, the local mayor, Olivier Barbarin, looked out to sea near where the survivors had been brought to shore. He said: "There is great sadness and heartbreak, when you see bodies brought in, and the crying of children who have been saved but who may have lost a big sister or brother."

He said that whereas once 30 to 40 people would be crammed into an inflatable, numbers now often reached 80 onboard. Boats often departed in the early hours of the morning, but increasingly they were also leaving during the day. He described the incongruous sight of women and children crying as they tried to squeeze on to a boat while other children playing in the sand watched "open-mouthed".

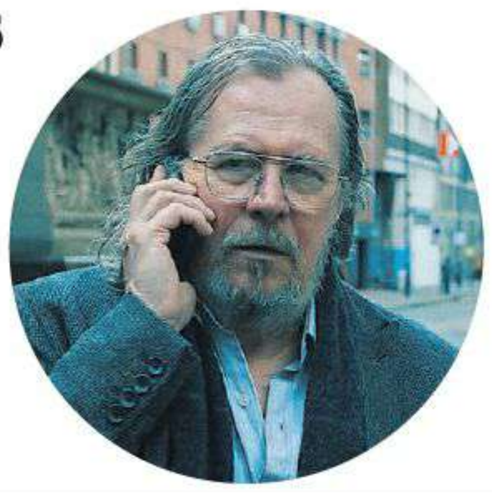
Le Portel town hall is often used to distribute food and clothes to people who have been rescued. "I regularly speak to these people, who tell me they absolutely want to reach England," Barbarin said. "Many speak very good English, or they have family members there, or they are persuaded they can get work in England without papers."

On Monday alone, 351 migrants crossed in small boats, with 21,615 having made the journey this year, according to the UK government. The French home affairs minister, Gérald Darmanin, said France was stopping 60% of crossings, and that 1,700 police and gendarmes were stationed on the coast, but called for the EU and Britain to negotiate a new treaty on migration.

In Boulogne, Sandrine, 42, a port worker, said: "Everyone here thinks this is a complete catastrophe. It is shameful that people are dying. We have to find a way to stop this."

Paul, who also works in the port, said: "People think England is El Dorado and want to get there. I feel sadness, but I don't know who is to blame any more. Politicians need to fix this."

Jackson's back
Slow Horses makes a welcome return
Page 13



Rewilding Skiddaw
England's highest nature reserve
Page 15

'Our hearts are broken': family mourns death of man killed walking dog

Hannah Al-Othman
Vikram Dodd

Relatives of a pensioner who was killed while walking his dog in a park near his Leicester home have said their hearts are broken by the loss of a "loving, caring person whose life centred around his family".

Bhim Kohli, 80, was attacked in Franklin Park close to his home in Braunstone Town on Sunday evening and died in hospital on Monday.

Five children aged 12 to 14 were arrested in connection with the incident. On Tuesday night police said four had been released with no further action. A 14-year-old boy, who cannot be named because of his age, was charged with murder last night and will appear in Leicester youth court today.

Kohli's family said in a statement: "Bhim was a loving husband, dad and grandad. He was also a son, brother and uncle. He adored his grandkids with all his heart and loved spending time with them. He really was such a loving, caring person whose life was centred around his family.

"Bhim loved to laugh. He was always very happy and talkative, the joker of the family.

"We have been overwhelmed by the messages and support from many who knew him. Our hearts have been completely broken."

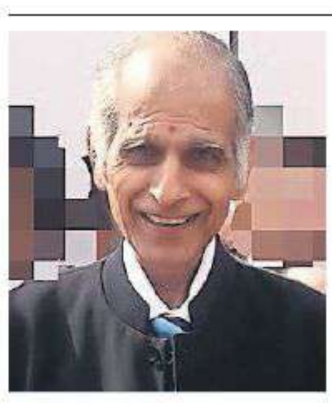
Among his neighbours, Kohli was described as a "lovely man" with a sense of humour and a ready smile, who remained fit despite his age, was dedicated to his allotment, and was regularly seen out walking his dog.

It is understood that at least two separate incidents of antisocial behaviour on Kohli's street had been reported to police in recent weeks.

In July, police were called after youths spat and shouted racist abuse at Kohli. Due to their prior contact, Leicestershire police have made a mandatory referral to the IOPC.

In August, stones were thrown at another neighbour, described as an "Asian man".

Terry Richardson, leader of Blaby district council, said: "We are working with Braunstone Town council and doing all we can to ensure our community feels secure."



◀ Bhim Kohli's neighbours described him as a lovely and friendly man who was often seen out walking his dog



▲ Labour wants to shrink the Lords, which has around 800 members, to the size of the Commons, with 650

PHOTOGRAPH: KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/POOL/AFP

Labour moves to expel last 92 hereditary peers from Lords

Eleni Courea
Political correspondent

The government is to banish all remaining hereditary peers from the House of Lords in the biggest shake-up of parliament in a quarter of a century.

The UK's 92 remaining hereditary peers – who have inherited their titles from their parents – will lose their right to sit and vote in the upper chamber under proposals put forward by ministers today.

The move would complete reforms first made by Tony Blair's government, which revoked the 700-year-old right of all hereditary peers to sit in the Lords in 1999. Just 92 of them, elected from the whole group, were allowed to remain until an agreement could be reached to phase them out altogether.

All 92 hereditary peers who now hold seats in the Lords are white men, and their average age is just under 70. They have continued to top up their numbers by holding byelections when one of them retires or dies.

Campaigners have long called for the system to be overhauled. In its manifesto, Labour said the continued existence of hereditary peers was "indefensible".

The government's bill will mean that there will no longer be any hereditary peers in the upper chamber. The earl marshal and the lord great chamberlain, who had been expected to keep their seats because of their ceremonial functions, will also be removed. The bill is likely to become law some time next year, and will fulfil a Labour manifesto commitment.

Nick Thomas-Symonds, the minister for the constitution, said this was "a landmark reform".

"The hereditary principle in law making has lasted for too long and is out of step with modern Britain," he said. "The second chamber plays a vital role in our constitution and people should not be voting on our laws in parliament by an accident of birth."

Angela Smith, the leader of the Lords, said: "While recognising the valuable contributions many hereditary peers have made to parliament, it is right that this reform is being brought forward now – completing work we began 25 years ago.

"Removing the hereditary principle from the Lords will deliver on a manifesto commitment. It will also help deliver on our commitment to reduce the size of the second chamber, as we bring forward further reforms."

Smith has previously said that Labour wanted to shrink the Lords, which currently has around 800 members, to the same size as the Commons, which has 650. Most members of the Lords are appointed life peers, though 26 places are reserved for archbishops and bishops of the Church of England.

In its manifesto, Labour committed to introducing a retirement age of 80 for life peers and to ultimately replacing the Lords with an alternative second chamber that is more representative of the UK.

> *'The hereditary principle in law making is out of step with modern Britain'*
>
> **Nick Thomas-Symonds**
> *Minister for the constitution*

In the meantime, the government has sought to bolster its numbers in the upper chamber by appointing a series of life peers including several retiring Labour MPs.

James Timpson, the former chief executive of the Timpson Group, and Patrick Vallance, the former government chief scientific adviser, have been handed peerages so that they could take up ministerial positions. More appointments are expected in the coming months.

At present there are 277 Conservative peers, 185 Labour ones and 183 crossbenchers.

The bill to abolish hereditary peers will have its first reading in the Commons today and its second reading later this autumn. Government figures expect the bill to be debated for a long time once it has made its way to the Lords.

Of the 92 hereditary peers who retain seats in the Lords, 42 take the Conservative party whip and 28 are crossbenchers. Only two are Labour peers and three are Liberal Democrats. These numbers are fixed and do not change to reflect the makeup of parliament.

The only country besides the UK with a hereditary element in its legislature is Lesotho, according to the University College London constitution unit.

'It is now on you to deliver justice': pressure on police in wake of report

Continued from page 1

spread of combustible cladding and found that David Cameron's "bonfire of red tape" deregulation drive meant matters affecting fire safety and risk to life "were ignored, delayed or disregarded" in the years before the fire.

The Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation consistently ignored residents' views and "treated the demands of managing fire safety as an inconvenience" in "a betrayal of its statutory obligations to its tenants", it said.

The inquiry also found that:

- Arconic, the US aluminium giant that supplied the plastic-filled cladding panels that were the main cause of the fire spreading, "deliberately concealed from the market the true extent of the danger of Reynobond 55 PE in cassette form [the panels used on Grenfell], particularly on high-rise buildings". It sold this product despite knowing that the danger to occupants was "significant".
- Celotex, which made most of the combustible foam insulation, "embarked on a dishonest scheme to mislead its customers and the wider market".
- Kingspan, which made a small amount of the insulation, "knowingly created a false market in insulation for use on buildings over 18 metres in height" by knowingly making a false claim about test results.

Moore-Bick concluded: "One very significant reason why Grenfell Tower came to be clad in combustible materials was systematic dishonesty on the part of those who made and sold the rainscreen cladding panels and insulation products. They engaged in deliberate and sustained strategies to manipulate the testing processes, misrepresent test data and mislead the market."

Kingspan claimed that the report showed "clearly and unambiguously that the type of insulation (whether combustible or non-combustible) was immaterial, and that the principal reason for the fire spread was the PE ACM cladding, which was not made by Kingspan". It said its "historical failings … were not found to be causative of the tragedy".



▲ *David Cameron's 'bonfire of red tape' as PM was unhelpful for safety*

Celotex, which is owned by the conglomerate Saint-Gobain, said: "Decisions about design, construction and the selection of materials for the tower were made by construction industry professionals."

Arconic rejected any claim that it sold an unsafe product and said it "did not conceal information from or mislead any certification body, customer, or the public".

The inquiry found that Rydon, the main contractor for the refurbishment, displayed a "casual attitude to fire safety" and "bears considerable responsibility for the fire", while Harley Facades, which installed the lethal cladding system, "bears a significant degree of responsibility for the fire" because it assumed others would check it was safe.

The architect Studio E demonstrated "a cavalier attitude to the regulations affecting fire safety" and "bears a very significant degree of responsibility for the disaster".

There was also criticism of local authority leaders. The inquiry concluded that financial considerations had driven a decision by Laura Johnson, the director of housing, to slow down installation of self-closing mechanisms on fire doors despite warnings from the London fire brigade that their absence compromised fire escape routes. She also opposed a new inspection regime.

She did so "without having taken any advice about the consequences for the safety of residents", the inquiry found. Smoke spread into escape routes on the night of the fire through open doors with missing or defective closers.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's response demonstrated a "marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity". Its chief executive, Nicholas Holgate, was "unduly concerned" for the council's reputation and "was not capable of taking effective control".

Many Muslim residents were observing Ramadan, but the council had "no regard for their cultural or religious needs" and people suffered "discrimination in ways that could and would have been prevented if the guidance had been properly followed", the report found.

Elizabeth Campbell, the leader of the council, who was in the inquiry room yesterday, said she fully accepted the inquiry team's "withering critique of a system broken from top to bottom", adding: "It shows beyond doubt that this council failed the residents of Grenfell Tower and the 72 people, including 18 children, who died. We will learn from every single criticism in the report."



'Blood on their hands' Families react to inquiry's scathing verdict

Emine Sinmaz
Robert Booth

With tears in their eyes and pain etched on their faces, the bereaved and survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire demanded "nothing less" than manslaughter charges against those responsible for the disaster.

The families said they had been "robbed of justice" and feared "perpetrators literally getting away with murder" as they faced a wait of at least three years to find out if anyone would be convicted for the failings that led to the inferno which killed 72 people.

At the culmination of the seven-year public inquiry, Tiago Alves, who survived the disaster, accused the multimillion-dollar companies whose products spread the fire of having "blood on their hands" while the Grenfell United group condemned the corporations as "little better than crooks and killers". At an emotional press conference in west London that opened with one minute's silence, the bereaved sat in front of photographs of their loved ones and a set of kitchen scales weighing the seven-volume, 1,700 page inquiry report that apportions blame for the tragedy.

The group said that at the end of the inquiry, all they had been left with was "10kg of words on pages".

The families, from the Grenfell Next of Kin group, blamed the calling of the inquiry in the immediate aftermath of the disaster for the delays in bringing prosecutions. The Met police, which has been investigating the disaster, said the police investigation is independent of the public inquiry and cannot use its findings.

> *'We have to fight again. I don't know how many years it's going to take'*
>
> **Maria Jafari**
> *Victim's daughter*

Maria Jafari, who lost her father Ali Yawar Jafari in the fire, left the table in tears after condemning the report as nothing more than a "big bag of paper", saying: "Seven years have passed, and we still have no justice and we have to fight again. I don't know how many more years it's going to take and nobody knows if we're going to be alive for the justice."

Hisam Choucair, who lost six family members, thanked the inquiry for its findings but said: "This inquiry was forced on us. For me, as a direct kin, this inquiry hasn't taught me anything. In fact, it's delayed the justice my family deserves."

He called the inquiry a "joke" and fought back tears as he added: "Words cannot describe the pain that I have gone through, the pain that my family has gone through, with having this inquiry running parallel to the criminal investigation. Watching the inquiry

▼ *Natasha Elcock, the chair of Grenfell United, speaks to the media after the publication of the inquiry's final report* PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



for me has been very painful. I've seen witnesses laugh giving evidence, which burns me inside. How can they have the cheek to do that, knowing that they are partially to blame for what happened on that horrific day?"

Shah Aghlani said the inquiry was set up as he was going from hospital to hospital looking for his mother, who he later discovered had died in the fire. His aunt was also killed.

"In no way were we involved in the beginning or consulted," he said. "If somebody wanted to create a system that prevents justice you could not have created a better system than what is in place now."

He said he believed that any future prosecutions would only result in "minor charges with perpetrators literally getting away with murder, which is the system we have in this country". But he added that he would settle for "nothing less" than manslaughter charges.

Kimia Zabihyan, a spokesperson for the group, told how Francis Dean was on the phone to his friend Zainab Deen who was trapped in the block with her toddler, Jeremiah, who both died.

Dean criticised the "seven-year delay to justice" as he told how he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and had lost his job in the aftermath of the fire. "Since that night I've not been the same person, I'm messed up," he said.

Earlier Grenfell United, which represents some of the families, said Sir Martin Moore-Bick's findings shows they were "failed by calculated dishonesty and greed" and that their lawyers were correct to tell the inquiry that corporate bodies, such as Kingspan, Celotex and Arconic, were "little better than crooks and killers".

Speaking after the report was published, Natasha Elcock, on behalf of the group, said: "We paid the price of systematic dishonesty, institutional indifference and neglect."

She added: "Above all, the judge concludes what we already knew. Every single loss of life that night was avoidable. Human life was never a priority, and we lost friends, neighbours and loved ones in the most horrific way - from greed, corruption, incompetence and negligence."

Some survivors welcomed the report's recommendations but said the fight was not over. Tiago Alves, 27, who was at home on the 13th floor when the fire broke out, said: "I think it proves what we've been screaming and shouting about since 2017 but it's good to have the evidence to back it up."

He said the inquiry was an important step "towards the truth" but that he hoped for prosecutions. "Arconic, Celotex, Kingspan, and a bunch of the other corporates, Rydon, they all have blood on their hands," he said.

Survivor Nicholas Burton said he feared that those affected by the fire would still be waiting for justice on the tenth anniversary of the tragedy. "We need jail time," he said. "If I break the law, I'm going to jail and that's the system."

▼ *Sir Martin Moore-Bick, inquiry chair, criticised guidance on how to meet fire safety building regulations* PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN/THE GUARDIAN



Key findings
What went wrong and who was at fault

Many were at fault for the disaster
The report says the architects Studio E, the builders Rydon and Harley Facades, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's building control department all bear responsibility for the fire. Arconic, the US corporation that supplied the plastic-filled cladding panels that were the main cause of fire spread, Celotex, which made most of the combustible foam insulation, and Kingspan, which made a small proportion of the insulation, were strongly criticised.

The landlord's role
The Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation was directly in charge of the refurbishment. It was appointed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to run its council housing stock. Its chief executive, Robert Black, established a "pattern of concealment … in relation to fire safety matters" and the TMO "treated the demands of managing fire safety as an inconvenience". The inquiry detailed a relentless focus on cost.

The 'rebel residents'
There was particular conflict with Ed Daffarn, a resident organiser who had questioned the appointment of the architect and ran a blog that vigorously challenged what he and others saw as a failing landlord body.

"Those in the TMO who were responsible for managing the refurbishment were nervous of him and allowed him to become a barrier to proper communication with the rest of the community," the inquiry found.

The survivors 'living in limbo'
The report talked about the "long-lasting trauma" of survivors, the bereaved and those evacuated from nearby homes "whose lives have been changed forever". The panel said the survivors were "comprehensively failed" and "left to fend for themselves".

In many cases, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea failed to provide adequate emergency accommodation. "Survivors described it as living in a limbo, with no space to heal," the panel said.

Independent testing failures
The work of Building Research Establishment, which was involved in checking the insulation provided by Celotex and Kingspan on fire-testing walls, was "marred by unprofessional conduct, inadequate practices, a lack of effective oversight, poor reporting and a lack of scientific rigour", the inquiry concluded.

Response from accused firms
Arconic has said it rejects any claim it sold an unsafe product and said it was legal for sale in the UK. It said it "regularly conducted tests of its materials using third-party testing bodies and that reports on these results were all publicly available" and made these reports available to its customers. It said it "did not conceal information from or mislead any certification body, customer, or the public".

Delays impacting the inquiry
The public inquiry took evidence over 400 days, spanning seven years. It was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, faced a refusal by witnesses from Arconic to attend, and uncovered a "merry-go-round of buckpassing" among about 35 companies and organisations. The process has cost the taxpayer at least £200m.

Misleading test certificates
The inquiry said the fact that Arconic, Kingspan and Celotex "were able to obtain misleading certificates relating to their products is evidence of a serious failure of the system and points to a need for a different approach". It wants a regulator to be responsible for assessing the conformity of construction products with laws, regulations and industry norms and to issue certificates.

The state of regulations
One of the reasons the Grenfell disaster happened was that the building regulations were unclear. But Sir Martin Moore-Bick, the inquiry chair, said the guidance on how to meet the fire section of the regulations still did not provide "the information needed to design buildings that are safe in fire". The panel said this guidance "needs to be reviewed … and amended annually or promptly".

High-rise fire
Tower block ablaze on day report is published

Dozens of firefighters were called to tackle a blaze in a tower block in south-east London yesterday, less than two hours after the publication of the damning report into the Grenfell Tower fire.

The London fire brigade (LFB) received calls from the public at lunchtime after a fire broke out in two flats on the ninth and 10th floors of the block in Catford.

At one stage thick smoke could be seen billowing from the top corner of the 11-storey building, as dozens of firefighters were dispatched to the scene. At about 2.20pm they said the blaze had been brought under control and there were no reports of any injuries. What had started the blaze was not immediately clear.

The LFB urged the public to avoid the area around Rosenthal Road, while firefighters worked to extinguish the blaze. The road was closed to traffic. The LFB said at the time: "Ten fire engines and around 70 firefighters are tackling a fire at a block of flats on Rosenthal Road in Catford. The brigade's 999 control officers have taken almost 50 calls to the blaze. The brigade was called at 12.51pm. Fire crews from Forest Hill, Greenwich, Deptford, Lee Green and surrounding fire stations are at the scene."

The blaze follows an incident on Monday last week in which the Spectrum building, a block of flats in Dagenham, east London, which was having "non-compliant" cladding removed, was badly damaged in a fire. No one was seriously hurt, but 100 people had to be evacuated from the eight-storey building.
Matthew Weaver



▲ *Seventy firefighters were sent to tackle a blaze in a block in Catford*

Firms at fault will be barred from public contracts, says Starmer

Peter Walker
Senior political correspondent

Companies condemned in the Grenfell Tower inquiry will no longer be considered for public contracts, Keir Starmer said yesterday, as the he apologised for decades of state failures uncovered by the inquiry.

In a sombre statement to the Commons, Starmer said action over contracts would be one of the first steps in response to the final report of the inquiry chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick into the 2017 disaster.

It comes after a leading member of Grenfell United, which represents survivors and bereaved family members, told the Guardian this week that companies found at fault should no longer receive public contracts.

About £250m in public deals have been made in the past five years with corporations involved in the high-rise's refurbishment, according to searches of public contracts by the outsourcing data firm Tussell conducted for the Guardian. They include companies currently or formerly owned by Saint-Gobain, which made the combustible Celotex insulation used on the tower, and Rydon, the main contractor for the works.

"I can tell the house today that this government will write to all companies found by the inquiry to be part of these horrific failings as the first step to stopping them being awarded government contracts," Starmer said.

While stressing that he would support any legal moves against those found responsible, Starmer said it was vital to "not do or say anything that could compromise any future prosecution because the greatest injustice of all would be for the victims and all those affected not to get the justice that they deserve".

In his apology, which was echoed by the opposition leader, Rishi Sunak, Starmer said the failings went as far back as a 1991 fire in the Knowsley Heights block in Merseyside, where cladding was found to have played a role.

On Grenfell, Starmer said: "The simple truth is that the deaths that occurred were all avoidable and that those who lived in the tower were badly failed over a number of years and in a number of different ways by, as the report lays out in full, just about every institution responsible for ensuring their safety."

While saying that "words can begin to lose their meaning" in the face of such horror for victims and relatives, Starmer said he wanted to apologise "on behalf of the British state to each and every one of you, and indeed to all of the families affected by this tragedy".

He added: "It should never have happened. The country failed to discharge its most fundamental duty – to protect you and your loved ones, the people who we are here to serve. And I am deeply sorry. I also want to express my admiration for the strength it must have taken to relive these events when giving your evidence to the inquiry.

"Today is a long-awaited day of truth, but it must now lead to a day of justice, justice for the victims and the families."

Saying the government would respond to the inquiry's recommendations in full within six months, Starmer promised to speed up the "far, far too slow" process of removing unsafe cladding from other buildings.

Responding for the Conservatives, Sunak said the report laid bare "a damning indictment of over 30 years of successive state failures" and promised to support the government in efforts to remove cladding.

This week Celotex said it and Saint-Gobain wished to "reaffirm their deepest sympathies to everyone affected by the devastating tragedy at Grenfell Tower," adding: "Independent safety tests commissioned after the review showed the system described in Celotex RS5000 marketing literature met relevant safety criteria."

Rydon did not respond to a request for comment.



◀ *Family members of Grenfell victims attend a press conference in London after the report was issued yesterday*



'Deliberate, dishonest, dismissive'

The key players and the verdict on their roles in refit's chain of failure

The Grenfell Tower public inquiry report features a cast of companies, authorities and people who were involved in the disastrous refurbishment. Here, we look at some of the key players.

Arconic

Arconic is the multibillion-dollar US company whose French subsidiary made the combustible cladding panels on Grenfell Tower. The inquiry found that despite close to a decade of internal knowledge about the risks, it was "determined to exploit what it saw as weak regulatory regimes in certain countries, including the UK".

In September 2007, two Arconic executives attended a presentation in Oslo, Norway, by a consultant called Fred-Roderich Pohl, who compared the combustibility of 5,000 sq metres of aluminium composite polyethylene (PE) core cladding to a truck containing 19,000 litres of oil. Pohl also warned of the even greater danger of lethal toxic smoke that could kill in two or three minutes and hypothesised that 60-70 people could die in a building fire.

Despite this, "there is no evidence that anyone at Arconic took steps to examine the safety of Reynobond 55 PE [the product sold for use on Grenfell] or to ascertain the financial consequences of selling only panels with a fire-resistant core", the inquiry found.

It did not withdraw the product but kept selling it "while withholding from the market relevant information about the product's fire performance".

In 2009 a senior executive, Claude Wehrle, showed colleagues pictures of an aluminium composite material (ACM) fire in Romania to demonstrate how dangerous the polyethylene-filled sheets could be when it came to architecture. In 2010 Wehrle told a colleague that the product performed worse in fire when folded into a cassette form and did not meet an advertised European standard but that should be kept "VERY CONFIDENTIAL!!!!"

> *'Arconic … promoted and sold a product knowing it presented a significant danger in any building'*
>
> **Grenfell Tower public inquiry report**

▼ *The 24-storey Grenfell Tower in west London this week, still shrouded in plastic seven years after the fire* PHOTOGRAPH: TOLGA AKMEN/EPA



These emails showed Arconic "deliberately and dishonestly" concealed from the market the true position, the inquiry found.

In 2014, before its panels were fitted to Grenfell Tower, Wehrle told Arconic's sales staff that the fire rating of the PE panels had been downgraded. But the British Board of Agrément (BBA), which had granted a certificate of performance, was not informed to amend the certificate. Deborah French, the salesperson in the UK, did not highlight the change to her client for the Grenfell cladding either. In fact, she sent them a copy of the existing BBA certificate.

There was "a sustained and deliberate strategy by Arconic to continue selling Reynobond 55 PE in the UK based on a statement about its fire performance that it knew to be false", the inquiry found. It concluded: "Arconic … promoted and sold a product knowing that it presented a significant danger to those who might use any buildings in which it was used."

Wehrle was one of three Arconic executives who refused to be cross-examined.

Kingspan and Celotex

The Irish company Kingspan, which turns over €8bn (£6.7bn) a year, made about 5% of the combustible foam insulation on Grenfell Tower, but the inquiry found that by its "dishonest marketing" of its K15 product it "created the conditions" for Celotex, another insulation company, to try to break into the market by "dishonest means".

According to the inquiry, "from 2005 until after this inquiry had begun [in 2017], Kingspan knowingly created a false market in insulation for use on buildings over 18 metres in height". It did this by claiming a fire test showed it could be used in any building taller than 18 metres when this "was a false claim, as it well knew".

Tests of the material in 2007 and 2008 "on systems incorporating the then current form of K15 were disastrous" but it kept selling, and "made a calculated decision to mask, or distract from, the absence of supporting test evidence".

When it was challenged it responded aggressively. When a company called Wintech raised questions about fire safety, Philip Heath, a senior manager at Kingspan, wrote in an email: "Wintech can go fuck themselves, and if they are not careful we'll sue the a#se off them."

The inquiry found that such emails "expose a casual disregard for public safety at a senior level in Kingspan, a determination to defend K15's position in the market at all costs and a keen awareness on Kingspan's part that it needed to find a way out of a situation that it had created through its own mendacity".

The inquiry found Kingspan had "long-running internal discussions about what it could get away with" that "betrayed no concern for accuracy".

The effect of its "dishonest marketing of K15 was to create a spurious market" for foam insulation on high-rise blocks that drew in Celotex as a competitor. Celotex found it impossible to create a similar product using its polyisocyanurate foam and could not understand how Kingspan had been able to make its product and meet the building regulations.

"It therefore embarked on its own campaign to break into the market by dishonest means," the inquiry found. "Kingspan cannot be blamed for Celotex's dishonesty, which was the choice of Celotex itself, but it did create the conditions that encouraged it and in which it was able to flourish."

Celotex's product, RS5000, was tested and marketed in a "dishonest and cynical way", which "reflected a culture within Celotex stretching back to at least 2009". The company had been acquired by Saint-Gobain in 2015, which aimed to boost profits from new products, of which RS5000 was one.

"Celotex embarked on a dishonest scheme to mislead its customers and the wider market," the inquiry found. The Building Research Establishment, the privatised former government test facility, was complicit when it allowed the inclusion of a fire-retardant board in a test in May 2014 to improve performance.

"Celotex presented RS5000 to Harley [Facades construction company] as suitable and safe for use on Grenfell Tower, although it knew that was not the case."

Central government

Officials and some ministers were "defensive and dismissive" when MPs raised concerns about fire safety of cladding before Grenfell. This was despite the 2009 Lakanal House fire in Camberwell, south London, where cladding had burned and six people had died.

The inquiry found: "In the years that followed … the government's deregulation agenda, enthusiastically supported by some junior ministers and the secretary of state [Eric Pickles], dominated the department's thinking to such an extent that even matters affecting the fire safety of life were ignored, delayed or disregarded."

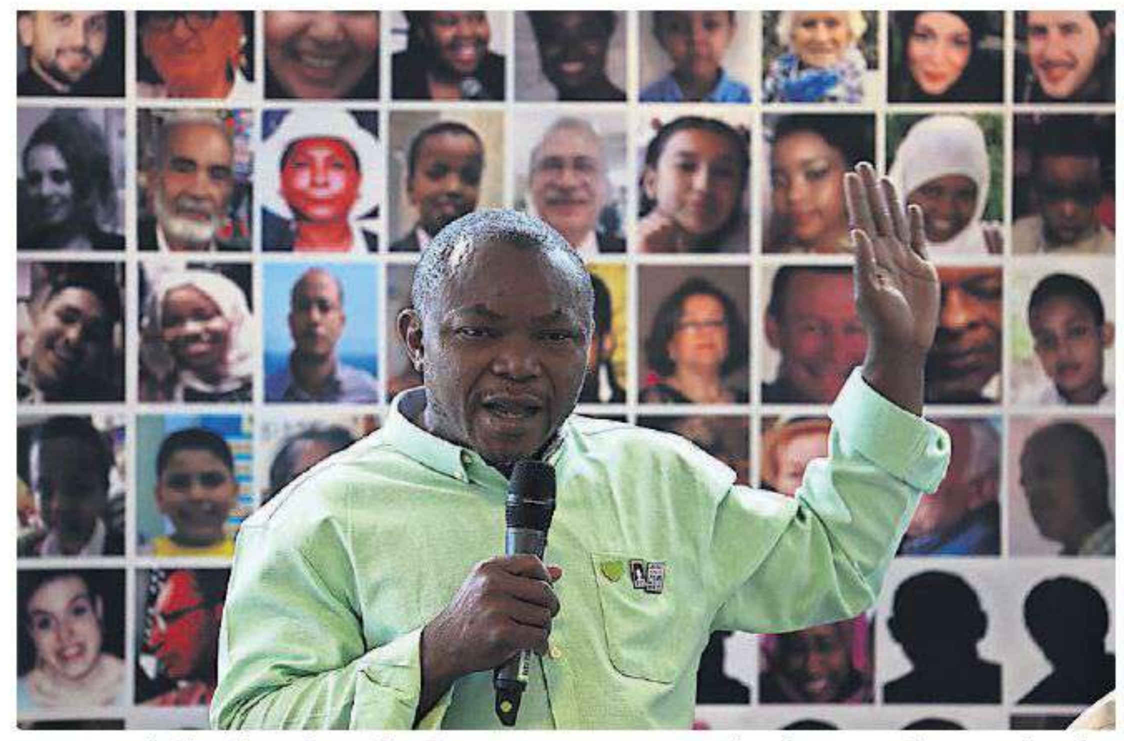
But the problem in government went back further - as far as a cladding fire at Knowsley Heights in Liverpool in 1991.

Tony Blair's Labour government failed to heed a warning from the environment and transport select committee in 1999. The government "also failed to pay due regard to the striking results of a large-scale test in 2001 involving aluminium cladding panels with unmodified polyethylene cores, which burned violently".

By 2012, after cladding fires around the world, the government knew the building regulations guidance on fire was "unclear and not properly understood" by many in the building industry.

The ministry was "poorly run" with "inadequate oversight". The official in charge of the building regulations, Brian Martin, "failed to bring to the attention of more senior officials the serious risks of which he had become aware and they in turn failed to supervise him properly".

"It was a serious failure to allow such an important area of activity to remain in the hands of one relatively junior official," the inquiry found. The department displayed "a complacent and at times defensive attitude to matters affecting fire safety".



◀ *A member of the Grenfell Next of Kin group at a press conference yesterday after the inquiry's final report was published* PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KITWOOD/ GETTY IMAGES

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (TMO)

The council landlord and its TMO were behind the £10m refurbishment plan for Grenfell Tower. For years there had been "distrust, dislike, personal antagonism and anger" between officials at the TMO and tenants.

"The TMO regarded some of the residents as militant troublemakers," the inquiry found. "The result was a toxic atmosphere fuelled by mistrust on both sides."

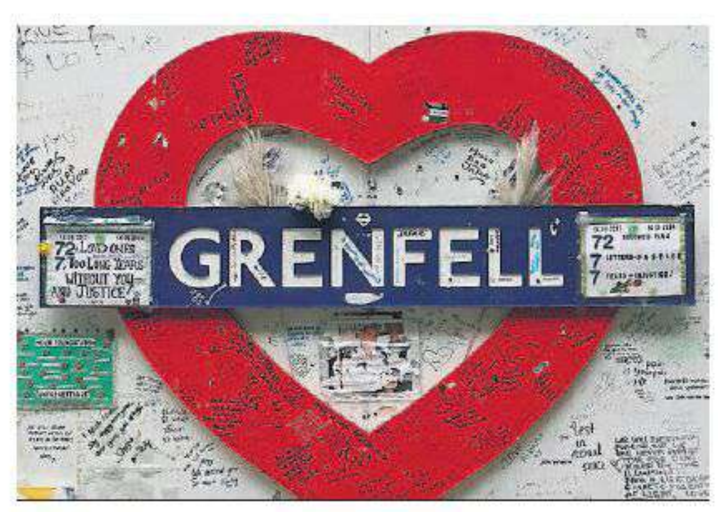
The TMO had "lost sight of the fact that the residents were people who depended on it for a safe and decent home", the inquiry found.

The RBKC and the TMO showed a "persistent indifference to fire safety, particularly the safety of vulnerable people" and the council's oversight of the TMO was "weak". The inquiry found that Robert Black, the TMO chief executive, had "an entrenched reluctance" to inform his overseers about fire safety matters - a "serious failure".

RBKC's building control department failed to ensure that the refurbishment complied with building regulations. John Hoban, the surveyor responsible for Grenfell, "was overworked, inadequately trained and had a very limited understanding of the risks of ACM panels". The building control department "therefore bears considerable responsibility for the dangerous condition of the building immediately on completion of the work.

"The TMO must also share blame. It failed to take sufficient care in its choice of architect and paid insufficient attention to matters affecting fire safety, including the work of the fire engineer."

Failure to gather information on disabled and vulnerable people that might assist with their evacuation in event of a fire "amounted to a basic neglect of its obligations in relation to fire safety".



2007

Year Arconic executives were told that composite cladding was as combustible as a truck filled with oil

1991

Date of a cladding fire at Knowsley Heights in Liverpool, which should have alerted authorities to the risk

Studio E, Rydon and Harley Facades

The architect, main contractor and cladding contractor were strongly criticised. Studio E, a now-defunct architectural practice, "demonstrated a cavalier attitude to the regulations affecting fire safety" and did not recognise that the cladding was combustible. It specified Celotex but it did not realise it was not suitable for buildings more than 18 metres in height, in accordance with the statutory guidance: "It therefore bears a very significant degree of responsibility for the disaster."

Rydon gave "inadequate thought to fire safety, to which it displayed a casual attitude" and "failed to take proper steps to investigate Harley's competence … it was complacent about the need for fire engineering advice". It "bears considerable responsibility for the fire".

Meanwhile, Harley "did not concern itself sufficiently with fire safety at any stage of the refurbishment and it appears to have thought that there was no need for it to do so, because others involved in the project and ultimately building control would ensure the design was safe".

It was induced to buy the Arconic panels "partly by its existing relationship with Arconic and the cladding fabricator CEP Facades, with which it was able to negotiate a favourable price". It "bears a significant degree of responsibility for the fire", the inquiry found.
Robert Booth

In Journal
'Nothing can now excuse inaction against those responsible'
Leader comment
Page 2 →



National
Grenfell inquiry

Victims likely to wait years before any convictions over fire failings

Vikram Dodd
Police and crime correspondent

Victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster face a wait of at least three years to find out if anyone will be convicted for the failings that led to the fire, despite the official report's blistering conclusions.

Police already suspected before the report was published that the fire and deaths were the result of criminal acts, having carried out their own extensive inquiries. A victims' group said the official report's findings backed their view that those to blame should be brought to justice.

The Metropolitan police, who have been investigating the disaster, justified the further delay, saying: "We have one chance to get our investigation right."

Offences being considered even before the publication of yesterday's report include corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, fraud, and health and safety offences, police have said.

The Met investigation is examining the causes of the fire for criminal culpability as well as looking at how the west London tower block came to be in such a condition that the blaze could spread so widely, with catastrophic consequences.

The Met deputy assistant commissioner, Stuart Cundy, said the official report reached "clear conclusions", but added it would take a further 12-18 months for detectives to send full files of evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service, which will make the charging decisions.

Police and the CPS earlier this year said criminal trials, if they take place, should not be expected until 2027.

Cundy said: "The report is direct, comprehensive and reaches clear conclusions. Our police investigation is independent of the public inquiry. It operates under a different legal framework and so we cannot simply use the report's findings as evidence to bring charges.

"To secure justice for those who died and all those affected by the fire we must examine the report – line by line – alongside the evidence from the criminal investigation. As I said previously, this will take us at least 12-18 months.

'To secure justice we must examine the report line by line … we have one chance to get this right'

Stuart Cundy
Metropolitan police

"This will lead to the strongest possible evidence being presented to the Crown Prosecution Service so it can make charging decisions.

"I can't pretend to imagine the impact of such a long police investigation on the bereaved and survivors, but we have one chance to get our investigation right."

The Met has a team of 180 officers and staff on its inquiry investigating 19 companies or organisations and 58 individuals.

About 50 people have been interviewed as suspects under criminal caution, the Met has said, and suspects and witnesses may have to be reinterviewed because of the findings and evidence in yesterday's report.

Police have removed the exterior of the tower as part of their investigation and have also recovered cladding, insulation, doors, windows, screws, nuts and bolts from the charred remains at the scene.

The Met says it is one of its most complicated criminal investigations, with 27,000 lines of inquiry. It expects to get files of evidence to the CPS, which makes charging decisions in England and Wales, by 2026.

Grenfell United, the group of survivors and families, said in a statement that the inquiry report vindicated its view, previously expressed by its lawyers to the inquiry, that some of the companies involved were "little better than crooks and killers".

The group said: "We have an expectation that the Met police and the CPS ensure that those who are truly responsible are held to account and brought to justice."

The London mayor, Sadiq Khan, said: "Those responsible must now be immediately held to account for their systematic dishonesty, corporate greed, institutional indifference and neglect. Companies found to have been to blame by the inquiry must no longer receive any public contracts as the police and CPS look into the bringing of criminal charges."

In a statement, Frank Ferguson, the head of the CPS's special crime and counter terrorism division, said: "We have been working closely with the Met police throughout their investigation, and will therefore be in a strong position to review the completed evidential file, which they anticipate will be passed to us in 2026.

"Our team of specialist prosecutors will then carefully review the file, but do not expect to make any charging decisions until the end of 2026.

"Due to the sheer volume of evidence and complexity of the investigation, we will need to take the necessary time to thoroughly evaluate the evidence."



What happens next?

How report may trigger improvements in safety

Haroon Siddique
Legal affairs correspondent

What did the report recommend?
Sir Martin Moore-Bick made 58 recommendations to prevent such a tragedy in future. They include the creation of a single regulator for the construction industry; the appointment of a chief construction adviser; a fire safety strategy for the construction or refurbishment of any higher-risk building; a licensing scheme for principal contractors; improving the education and training of architects; and establishing a college of fire and rescue.

What must the government do in response?
Grenfell United, which represents bereaved family members and survivors, said all the recommendations must be implemented without delay "because the time to address this is already three decades too late".

Ministers are not obliged to implement findings of public inquiries and past governments have sometimes failed to do so. An update published in February said 33 of the 46 recommendations from the 2019 phase 1 report of the inquiry had been completed.

The final report notes that important recommendations affecting fire safety had been ignored in the past, and includes a recommendation that it be a legal requirement for the government to maintain a publicly accessible record of recommendations made by select committees, inquiries and coroners, with a description of steps taken in response.

What has the government committed to doing?
Keir Starmer said the government would "carefully consider the report and its recommendations, to ensure that such a tragedy cannot occur again". He confirmed that the government would block companies criticised in the report from future public contracts, which was not a report recommendation but something Grenfell United had called for.

Will there be criminal prosecutions?
Grenfell United said "justice has not been delivered" and that those who were "truly responsible" must be held to account through the Metropolitan police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

A criminal investigation began in 2017 but, to much frustration, the Met later said it would not submit a file to prosecutors until the inquiry concluded. The CPS said yesterday that it did not expect to be in a position to make any charging decisions until the end of 2026 due to "the volume of evidence and complexity of the investigation". The Met acknowledged the effect of "such a long police investigation" on the bereaved and survivors but said it had only "one chance to get our investigation right".

What else is being called for in light of the report's findings?
The Fire Brigades Union said the government should go beyond what was set out in the report and bring the systems for delivering building safety under public ownership, thereby reversing the deregulation of recent decades.

What else is needed to prevent a future tragedy?
The government said earlier this year that "all residential buildings above 11 metres in England have a pathway to fix unsafe cladding", but it has yet to be removed from many tower blocks and is suspected to have contributed to the gutting of a block of flats in Dagenham, east London, last month.

The End Our Cladding Scandal campaign coalition believes that as many as 11,000 buildings taller than 11 metres may still be at risk.

▲ *The prime minister, Keir Starmer, said firms criticised in the report would be blocked from public contracts*
PHOTOGRAPH: UK PARLIAMENT/AFP



▼ *Firefighters rescue a man from Grenfell. The FBU is calling for stricter building safety rules*

Sketch
John Crace



MPs' mood matched the occasion, but to change Britain they'll have to do more than look sombre

This must never be allowed to happen again. How often have we heard that from a politician in parliament? I've almost lost count. In the recent past, we've had Hillsborough, Post Office Horizon and the infected blood scandal. And of course the Grenfell Tower fire. It seems that no matter how serious the inquiry, how deep the shame and the guilt, the tragedies just keep on coming.

So Keir Starmer was rightly in sombre mood as he made his statement to the Commons following the publication of Sir Martin Moore-Bick's report into the Grenfell fire. It was the least that the 72 victims and their families deserved. It also helped that no one in the chamber could conceivably be held to blame other than by their position and office in parliament. Remorse is always so much easier when you're not directly responsible. These caveats aside, the Commons did itself proud. No one tried to get party political. What needed to be said got said. As befits a lawyer, the prime minister was thorough and forensic. He admitted that it had taken too long for the truth to be revealed. He spoke of industry failures. Firms that had falsified safety reports. Governments that had been only too willing to cut corners as part of their austerity agenda. The bonfire of red tape had never blazed brighter than in June 2017.

Just as importantly, Starmer highlighted the two-tier justice. That the Grenfell residents had been ignored because they were working class or immigrants. Their concerns about fire safety brushed aside because they simply didn't matter enough. What counted was that the cladding was cheap and cheerful. The main concern the local council had was that Grenfell should not be an eyesore to those in the posh houses nearby.

> *It seems that no matter how serious the inquiry, how deep the shame and the guilt, the tragedies just keep on coming*

Rishi Sunak was equally measured in his reply. Running through all the same themes. He too offered an apology. Whether he will remain long enough in parliament to translate words into action is another matter. No one mentioned Eric Pickles, the former housing minister who was heavily criticised in the report. He was one of them, after all.

For now it is the thought that counts. I guess that will have to be enough for the Grenfell residents. They've just got to hope that it doesn't take too long for the memories to sink back below the surface. MPs have notoriously short attention spans. Not to say, highly selective. But hey! Fingers crossed. This time really might be the one where something changes.

Meanwhile, Starmer is clearly enjoying his honeymoon period. Not just as a result of knowing Rishi poses no threat, but because he's got an instant answer to everything. It's a short sentence that's written in capitals inside a folder that contains nothing else: "£22bn BLACK HOLE." Sunak tried asking about Labour's cut to the winter fuel allowance but Starmer came straight back at him. This one was on the Tories. They were the ones that trashed the economy.

Still, it gave Starmer the chance to get in a dig at the Tory members' favourite to replace Sunak. Kemi Badenoch had wanted to cut the winter fuel allowance too. Now she's in opposition, she's not so keen. Maybe Sunak was playing the long game. A chance to get his own back on Kemi for her disloyalty. She had learned from the master. Take a bow, Michael Gove.



Gary Oldman's monstrous Jackson Lamb shambles and roars like a bear dipped in chip fat

◀ *Oldman's jaded spy boss is given space to evolve as he is sent out into the field this season*
PHOTOGRAPH: JACK ENGLISH/ APPLE TV+

Television review

Can this faultlessly directed spy thriller keep up the quality?

Slow Horses
Apple TV+
★★★★☆

Jack Seale

Slough House, the building the ragtag of spies in Slow Horses work out of, is not a peaceful place. The fixtures are decrepit, the decor hums with mid-century must, the office banter is neither respectful nor constructive and, by the end of the new run of Apple TV+'s prestige espionage drama, the windows are smashed and the walls are pocked with bullet holes.

Slow Horses is, however, a comfortable show to slip back into. Discerning viewers, pleased by their own superb taste, revel in a series that is led by the sheer quality of Gary Oldman and Kristin Scott Thomas, and which evokes classic spy thrillers – intelligence work is a grand battle of wits, played by capable oddballs who are more concerned with winning the game than they are with real-world consequences – while updating the spies' badinage so they sound like disaffected cynics in an Armando Iannucci comedy. The recipe has worked; Slow Horses is a word-of-mouth hit. But this is season four, which is the point where a winning formula can start to feel formulaic. Can Slow Horses keep it up?



◀ *Kristin Scott Thomas, left, a series fixture as an icy MI5 boss, is joined by fine new cast members including Joanna Scanlan*

Its return has plenty that is familiar. Straight away, two things happen. The closest the show has to a traditionally heroic pin-up, River Cartwright (Jack Lowden), voices his concern about his grandfather, old-school spymaster David (Jonathan Pryce), whose dementia is getting worse. Meanwhile, a London shopping centre is attacked by a suicide bomber. By now we know that these events will somehow prove not to be independent.

Another grand conspiracy is woven together and then unravelled, with the misfits of Slough House staying one step ahead of their supposed superiors in MI5's headquarters. All the old beats are ready to be hit. There will be scenes where a bad guy is lurking somewhere and we don't know when he's going to jump out and attack the spook , and where the spook is engaged in hand-to-hand combat with an apparently invincible bad guy, and they improvise a weird way of surviving. There will, and this is an absolute certainty, be scenes where a spook is either chasing or being chased through a crowd of London commuters, and they have to knock bystanders out of the way.

Look past the deceptively expensive shabby chic and the faultless direction, and Slow Horses is often sticking closely to genre tropes. But it never lets itself go stale, and the new episodes benefit from new blood in what is already a luxuriously fine cast. James Callis, who was one of TV's best ever serpentine egomaniacs as Gaius Baltar in Battlestar Galactica, plays another smooth weasel in the form of fresh MI5 boss Claude Whelan.

The operative has evidently got his job by appealing to stuffed suits in Westminster ("My brief is to activate accountability and accessibility – that's the triple-A promise") but now has to manage his stone-cold operator of a deputy, Diana Taverner (Scott Thomas, wonderfully withering). Hugo Weaving, last seen as a dithering softie in the wry Australian comedy-drama Love Me, is now about as far from dithering or soft as he could be as the villain of the season, the mercenary Frank Harkness. Ruth Bradley is excellent as Emma Flyte, MI5's new attack dog; Joanna Scanlan is perfectly cast as Moira, an unstoppably fussy administrator; Tom Brooke is an unsettling wild card as JK Coe, a rookie who says and does almost nothing, but is brutally effective when he comes to life.

Slow Horses has slowly evolved its regulars too. The first thing newcomers notice is Oldman's performance as Jackson Lamb, Slough House's monstrously jaded ruler, who shambles and roars like a bear dipped in chip fat. A season or two ago, the showrunners realised he was, in more ways than one, wasted: there were only so many times he could sit in his stinking old chair being verbosely rude to his underlings. The process of sending him out into the field, where he can be a little more human and a lot more lethal, continues this year, as the show hunts successfully for new nuance and depth.

Lamb is involved in one of two unexpectedly beautiful interactions between long-term cast members – love stories under deep cover – which sneak up on viewers who have been swept along by all the quips and shootouts, but who are ready to care about the Slough House kooks, even if these scruffy reprobates refuse to care about themselves. Slow Horses may still be a safe bet, but it's not entirely the same old same old.

US playwright pays £1m to repair home of Shakespeare's daughter

Dalya Alberge

The charity that cares for historic Shakespeare sites in Stratford-upon-Avon has received an unprecedented donation of £1m from the Olivier award-winning US playwright Ken Ludwig.

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) can now pay for crucial conservation work on Hall's Croft, the home of Shakespeare's daughter Susanna and her physician husband, John Hall, who is believed to have advised his father-in-law on medical matters.



▲ *Hall's Croft is 'literally falling over', said the donor, Ken Ludwig*

It is the largest private donation in the trust's 177-year history. Ludwig has had a lifelong passion for Shakespeare.

He said that, while on a visit to Stratford, he felt he had to help after hearing of the building's plight while being shown round by Charlotte Scott, one of the SBT's directors. "They were asking themselves: 'How can we save Hall's Croft because it's literally falling over?' I said to them: 'What would it cost to save it?' They told me and I thought, if there's any time I can make a difference about the things I care about, this is it. So I just said: 'I'll do it.'"

This is his first substantial donation. "It's what's needed right now to keep the place upright."

Hall's Croft, one of the last complete examples of Jacobean architecture, dates back to 1613. But steel girders installed in the last century to support the roof are sinking into the ground.

An extension added in the 17th century is pulling away from the original house, so the two parts are leaning in different directions. Scott recalled showing Ludwig the huge metal girders "holding the house up" and found herself being astonished by his "extraordinary generosity and philanthropy".

Lena Cowen Orlin, the SBT's vice-chair and emeritus professor of English at Georgetown University in the US, said the building has "been suffering from the need for serious intervention".

Ludwig's 34 plays and musicals have been performed in 30 countries.

Asked about the emotion he feels on walking into Hall's Croft, he said: "A shiver of intellectual joy. It feels like a personal connection with Shakespeare."

Jenrick tops first round of voting in Tory leadership contest as Patel is knocked out

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

Robert Jenrick took the lead in the race to replace Rishi Sunak as Conservative party leader yesterday after a first round of voting by Tory MPs that placed the former immigration minister top and eliminated Priti Patel, the former home secretary.

Jenrick came top of a closely contested ballot , winning the support of 28 of his parliamentary colleagues, ahead of Kemi Badenoch, who won 22 votes, and James Cleverly on 21.

Patel came bottom of the six contenders with 14 votes despite being the best-known candidate and is now out of the race having polled just behind Mel Stride on 16 and Tom Tugendhat on 17.

The results, which were closer than many had expected, leave Jenrick the narrow favourite with the bookmakers, with much riding on the performance of the final four candidates at the Tory conference later this month.

Luke Tryl, the former Conservative adviser who now runs the polling company More in Common, said: "This is way more wide open than people were expecting. Party conference is going to be absolutely crucial."

Jenrick's supporters were delighted with their candidate's performance, saying they had expected him to win between 22 and 26 votes.

While Jenrick is not one of the more high-profile candidates among the public, he has won support in Westminster by pitching to the right, especially on immigration, despite his reputation as a centrist. John Lamont, one of the MPs backing him, said the result was "very positive", adding: "He is the one candidate who can unite all parts of the party."

Another MP described Jenrick's campaigning over the summer as "energetic", adding that he had worked on his speaking skills during that time. "He and James Cleverly were head and shoulders above Kemi at the hustings [on Tuesday]."

Badenoch, the combative former business secretary, has topped recent polls of Conservative members but is now facing a battle to become one of the final two candidates.

One official working on her campaign said: "Jenrick has the support of the right of the party, but we are winning votes on the right, left and centre of the party."

Badenoch, who has espoused rightwing views on identity and culture but has rejected Jenrick's "easy answers" on immigration, is now pitching herself as the more centrist of the two frontrunners. "She has the broader policy platform and appeals to a broader spectrum of the party," the official said.

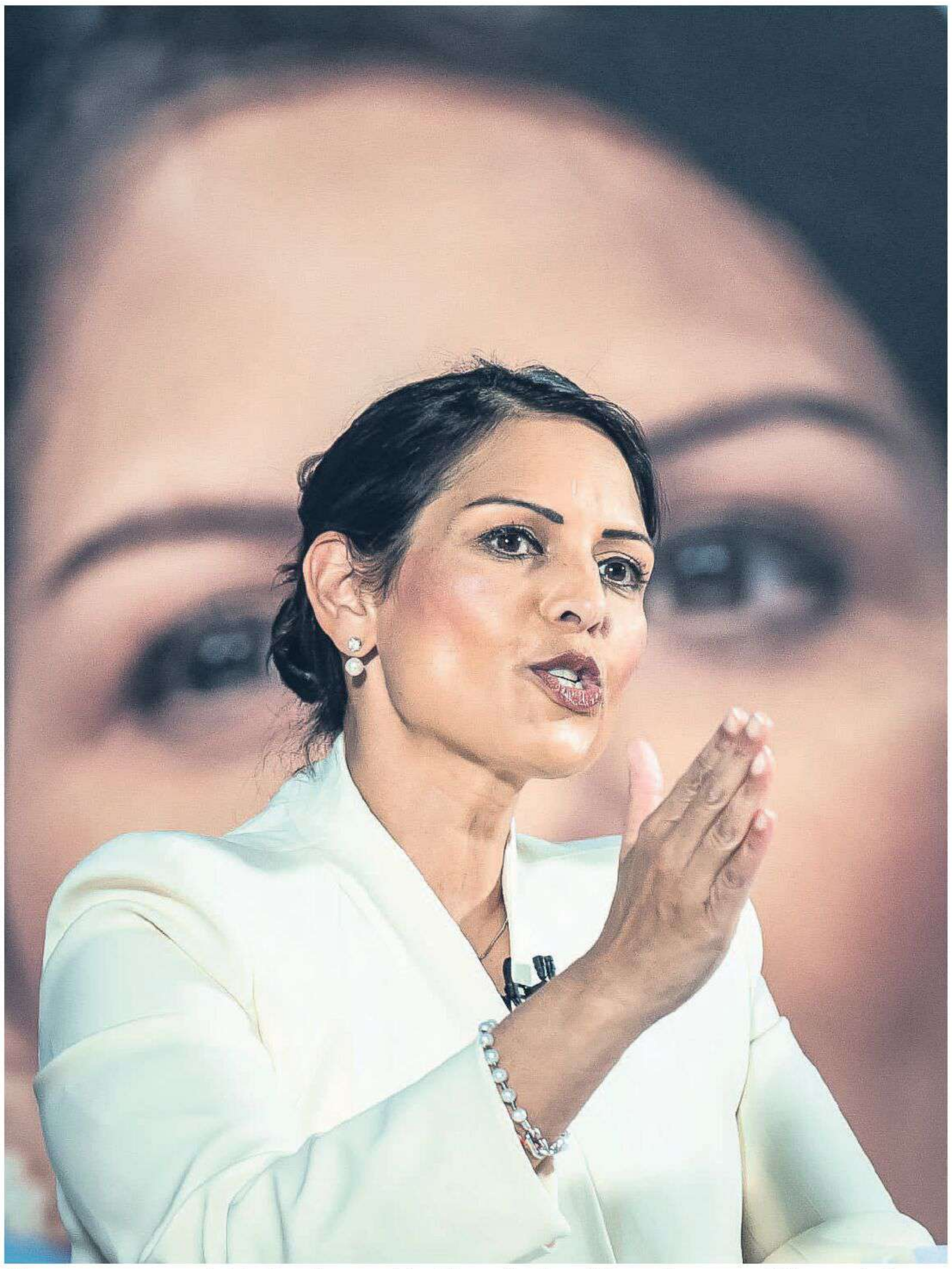
On the left of the party, Cleverly, the former home secretary, picked up significantly more support than Tugendhat, who used to be security minister. While both have focused heavily on national security, Cleverly now looks the more likely to reach the final two.

One supporter of Tugendhat called his performance "disappointing … at the bottom end of expectations".

Supporters of Patel were disappointed by the result, especially given her relatively high profile as a former home secretary and once the darling of the Tory right. Patel was a close ally of Boris Johnson but did not return to the frontbench after the former prime minister stood down.

One MP said many of Patel's expected supporters had gone to Jenrick instead, saying: "Jenrick had a better operation, and there was a feeling that she is from a previous generation and it is time to move on to someone new."

'This is way more wide open than people were expecting. Conference is going to be crucial'
Luke Tryl
More in Common



▶ *Priti Patel, the former home secretary, came bottom with 12 votes despite having the highest profile outside Westminster*
PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

FCA warns banks over denying sex workers business accounts

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

The City regulator has warned UK banks over denying accounts for sex workers, after hearing that a lack of access to business banking could lead to "significant harm" for individuals.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said that while banks claimed they were able to provide accounts for the adult entertainment industry, they were often denying or shutting down business accounts in practice.

Lenders often closed accounts on the basis of financial crime or reputational grounds, the watchdog said. That is despite sex work being legal in the UK apart from Northern Ireland, where it is illegal to pay for sex.

A recent FCA meeting revealed serious concerns about access to financial services for individuals across the adult entertainment industry, which covers stripping, pornography, escort and dominatrix work and prostitution.

"As adult entertainment industry representatives explained to us, these account denials or terminations could lead to significant harm for individuals running those businesses, particularly if they then had to rely on cash or personal bank accounts for their work, with the latter revealing their name to their clients and therefore exposing them to blackmail," the FCA said in a report released yesterday.

Some financial firms told the FCA they had found it difficult to balance financial crime regulations with financial inclusion. The FCA is now calling on lenders to issue a "clear and properly considered definition" of reputational risk to govern decisions about account closures.

Raven Bowen, the chief executive of National Ugly Mugs, which provides support to sex workers, said it welcomed the regulator's intervention.

The trade association UK Finance does not provide guidance for its members on the issue, and has previously said each bank would take a view depending on their commercial and risk appetite.

A spokesperson said: "If an account is closed, or an application refused, this only happens after extensive review and investigation. The main reason for this happening is dealing with financial crime concerns and banks have to follow strict regulations in this area."

Banking the proceeds of sex work is not a criminal offence. However, many related activities such as soliciting in a public place, operating brothels and pimping are unlawful.

In brief

Prisons

Plan to clear jail cells 'will fail due to riots'

The plan to free up prison spaces for 18 months with next week's launch of the early release scheme is doomed to fail because cells are being filled by rioters, the prison governors' leader has said.

Tom Wheatley, the president of the Prison Governors' Association, said the justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood, "will be lucky to get 12 months before we are full again" after hundreds of people were charged over the recent disorder.

Wheatley has urged ministers to consider more ways to free up space or build new cells at pace to avoid another overcrowding crisis next summer. **Rajeev Syal**

Education

School suspensions and exclusions up by a fifth

Suspensions and exclusions from schools in England went up by more than a fifth in the past year, according to analysis of live attendance data.

Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research also found cash-strapped councils are spending increasing amounts on educating pupils outside mainstream schools "where quality and safety is less guaranteed".

Comparing the first two terms of 2022-23 with the same period of 2023-24, researchers found the suspension and exclusion rate for secondary schoolchildren went up from 14.3% to 17%. **Sally Weale**

Music

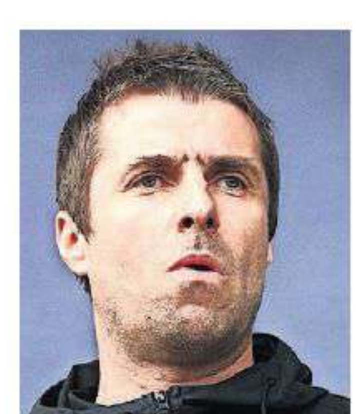
Oasis announce two more dates at Wembley

Oasis have announced two more shows at Wembley Stadium in London, promising a new "staggered invitation-only ballot".

Extra dates at the national stadium were announced after the band were heavily criticised over the use of dynamic pricing.

The gigs will take place on 27 and 28 September and applications to join the ballot will be available first for fans who were unsuccessful in the initial sales window with Ticketmaster.

As well as announcing the new dates, Oasis claimed the band did not know dynamic pricing would be used. **Tom Ambrose**





Rewilding Skiddaw Lake District peak to become England's highest nature reserve



Patrick Barkham

Skiddaw has long stood proud in the northern Lake District, a distinctive, treeless peak that is England's sixth highest mountain – but now the fell's barren heights will spring back to life after its purchase for rewilding by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

More than 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) of Skiddaw Forest, once a royal hunting ground, will become England's highest nature reserve and the UK's biggest project to restore Atlantic rainforest after the site came up for sale for £6.25m.

"We can't believe it, to be honest," said Stephen Trotter, the chief executive of the trust. "It's not every day you get the chance to buy a mountain, especially in the Lake District. It's really exciting to have the opportunity to put some nature back into this landscape."

Wildlife poised to return includes hen harriers, black grouse – which vanished from these fells relatively recently – water voles and rare upland bumblebees.

The mountain has heather sides that bloom in high summer, but its grassland is bleak and fairly uniform. The trust wants to revive a mosaic of habitats after decades of suppression by intensive sheep grazing. As well as temperate rainforest, there will be blanket bog, heathland, flower-rich acid grassland and montane scrub.

Montane scrub refers to low-lying trees and shrubs that survive at high altitude and provide food and a biodiverse sanctuary for rare birds such as black grouse. "It doesn't exist anywhere in the Lakes yet, but it should," Trotter said.



The trust was outbid during the sale of Skiddaw in 2022, but when it returned to the market the charity was able to snap it up thanks to £5m from a £38m Aviva fund for the restoration of temperate rainforest across western Britain. Now it must raise the final £1.25m from donations towards the purchase, which has been enabled by philanthropic loans.

The trust will plant 300,000 native trees over 250 hectares of Skiddaw, all of which will be sourced from seed harvested from local trees growing at altitude to boost the saplings' chances of survival. One third of the site is peatland that will not be planted with trees.



▲ *The barren peak of Skiddaw, England's highest mountain, will be rewilded by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. The black grouse, left, is among wildlife likely to return* PHOTOGRAPH: JOE MURPHY/PA

Instead, this blanket bog will be rewetted by blocking drains and holding back water so the peat remains saturated and continues to form, rather than drying up, shrinking and releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Gemma Jennings, Cumbria's peatland team manager, said: "It's storing a large amount of carbon by preserving it. Repairing those exposed areas which would release carbon is really, really important."

Rewilding schemes in the Lake District have faced criticism from some who say they are turfing sheep off the land and putting farmers out of business. But rewilding Skiddaw may prove less controversial because there have not been sheep there for a decade.

Although it could be some years before trees are established enough for livestock to be reintroduced, Trotter said the trust wanted to work with the farming community.

"We need to work together. It's not one or the other – farming or restoration. We've got to have both," he said.

"A wild landscape up here needs wild herbivores if we're going to draw back from direct human intervention in time. It is a 100-year vision. We're not trying to do everything at once."

Air and noise pollution damage male and female fertility – study

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

Air pollution is associated with a higher infertility risk in men, while noise pollution is associated with a higher risk of infertility in women, a study has found.

The study, which has been peer reviewed and published in the BMJ, looked at whether long-term exposure to road traffic noise and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), a particular form of air pollution, was associated with a higher risk of infertility in men and women.

It drew from a database of 526,056 men and 377,850 women aged 30 to 45 who had fewer than two children, were cohabiting or married, and who had lived in Denmark between 2000 and 2017. This subset of the database was selected to include a high proportion of people who were actively trying to become pregnant and so possibly at risk of infertility.

The study excluded sterilised men and women who had undergone surgery to prevent pregnancy.

Between 1995 and 2017, the average amount of PM2.5 pollution was recorded at the addresses of each participant, and infertility diagnoses were recorded from the national patient register.

> **24%**
> *Increased risk of infertility in men aged 30-45 after exposure to higher levels of PM2.5 particulates in air*

Across the 18-year period, infertility was diagnosed in 16,172 men and 22,672 women, and after adjusting for factors such as income, education level, and occupation, it was found that exposure to PM2.5 levels that were 2.9 micrograms per cubic metre higher than average over five years was associated with a 24% increased risk of infertility in men aged 30 to 45.

PM2.5 was not associated with infertility in women, but exposure to average levels of road traffic noise that were 10.2 decibels higher over five years was associated with a 14% increased risk of infertility among women over 35. Noise was not associated with infertility for women aged 30 to 35.

Road traffic noise was associated with a small increased risk in male infertility for those aged between 37 and 45, but not those aged 30 to 37.

Infertility affects one in seven couples in the UK trying to conceive.

Research links brain network to depression

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

Researchers have gained new insight into how and why some people experience depression after finding a particular brain network is far bigger in people with the condition.

On the surface of the brain there is a finite amount of space for different areas to talk to each other to carry out particular processes.

Now researchers say that in people with depression, a larger part of the brain is involved in the network that controls attention to rewards and threats than in those without depression. That expansion means the size of other, often neighbouring, brain networks is smaller.

The study, published in the journal Nature, found that a part of the brain called the frontostriatal salience network was expanded by 73% on average in participants with depression compared with healthy controls.

The researchers added that brain scans from 57 children who developed depression as adolescents revealed this network was expanded years before their symptoms developed, while it was also expanded in adults with late onset depression.

They said this suggested an expanded brain network could be a risk factor for developing depression rather than a consequence of the condition.

However, they said it was unclear to what extent this enlarged network was the result of genetics or experiences, and whether the association with depression arose from this expansion or from other brain networks consequently being smaller.


F&F ACTIVE:
Exclusively for TESCO
Available in the majority of Extras.

Film review

Supervillains find their own kind of love but Joker sequel falls flat

Joker: Folie à Deux
Venice film festival
★★★☆☆

Peter Bradshaw

Five years ago, Todd Phillips released Joker, his much-acclaimed take on the DC Comics supervillain, with Joaquin Phoenix wearing the clown makeup as the bananas Pagliacci, Arthur Fleck, in an odd pastiche Scorsese thriller. I found it bizarrely overpraised and overrated, but it became a prize-winning sensation.

Now the sequel is here, and for all that it ends up being as strident and laborious and often flat-out tedious as the first film, there's certainly an improvement. It's a musical, of sorts, with Phoenix and others warbling show tunes, often in fantasy set pieces. This gives it structure and flavour, which the first film didn't have.

And that sensational acting and musical talent Lady Gaga is now in the mix, as Harleen Quinzel (Harley Quinn). She is a deeply disturbed psychiatric patient who meets Joker in the music therapy class he is allowed to attend as reward for good behaviour while on remand, waiting to stand trial for his five murders. They fall deeply in love, adding to the self-adoration of each, although it is never quite clear if their narcissism is an intentional effect.

Arthur is conflicted, longing to embrace the Joker identity he is advised to reject

No doubt about it, the opening is sensational. A spoof Warner Bros Looney Tunes cartoon reprises the story so far, raising the curtain for a barnstorming first section showing Arthur's prison existence. There's a great supporting cast, with Brendan Gleeson as the prison guard, Catherine Keener as Arthur's lawyer, Steve Coogan as a tabloid TV interviewer, and Zazie Beetz briefly reprising her role as Arthur's former neighbour.

There's a real spark when Joker and Harley meet. But the whole movie finally turns out to be oppressively, claustrophobically and repetitively becalmed in that oddly unreal Gotham-universe jail, with Phoenix and Lady Gaga kept apart for long periods. Phoenix's performance is as single-note as before, though certainly as forceful, and his screen presence is potent.

The gameplan of defence lawyer Maryanne Stewart (Keener) is to convince the judge her client was psychologically disturbed by his abusive upbringing and so deserves hospital treatment on the grounds of diminished responsibility. District attorney Harvey Dent (Harry Lawtey) says Arthur is not mad and deserves the electric chair.

As for Arthur himself, he is conflicted. He understands that the insanity plea is his only chance. But he also longs to embrace his Joker destiny again – to embrace the crazy scary-clown persona that his lawyer tells him to reject.

Lady Gaga, meanwhile, brings a sly and manipulative malice to her role. Harley is genuinely disturbed in a way that Arthur/Joker perhaps isn't. Is she to be the Lady Macbeth of DC supervillainy? Sort of. This story doesn't give her character much of a chance at development.

It's possible to feel restless in the final section of this longish film, wondering if anything remotely plausible or sad or funny or unexpected is going to be revealed about Arthur, given that the film's body language is always insisting on its own mythic importance. Well, it's this crazy self-possession that propels the film up its laborious narrative gradient. And Lady Gaga delivers a diva charge. Could it be that her Harley Quinn will return in an adventure of her own?



◀ *There is a real spark when Harley Quinn (Lady Gaga) and Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) meet. Below, Lady Gaga at the Venice film festival yesterday*
MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: GISELA SCHOBER/ GETTY IMAGES



Long delays in NHS care are causing serious lifelong harm to children

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

Children across the UK are suffering serious damage to their health – including chronic pain, asthma flare-ups, weight loss and developmental problems – because of long delays for NHS care.

Some under-18s are finding it so hard to obtain prompt treatment for their diabetes or epilepsy that they are forced to turn to A&E for care because their health has deteriorated so badly.

Children's doctors said the findings were "shocking" and warned that some children would endure "lifelong consequences" as a result of delays that could sometimes last several years.

The details have emerged in a dossier of evidence the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has collated illustrating the harm that treatment unavailability causes.

One paediatrician specialising in neurodevelopmental problems said children who joined the list had to wait six years for their first appointment because the service was unable to meet demand. Another said the average waiting time for an initial consultation was three years and five months.

The anxiety and challenges caused by the delays can be so difficult for children and families to deal with that some parents have even split up as a result of that pressure, because they have reached "breaking point", the college said. In addition, some families are being forced to pay for private care, in order to circumvent NHS waiting lists.

The RCPCH said its survey of 195 paediatricians working in the four home nations showed that NHS officials had to put more resources into under-18s care.

It also found that some children are:

- Putting on a lot of weight because of long delays in getting an initial blood test for hypothyroidism and then seeing a specialist in hormone-related conditions before starting treatment.
- Spending years in poverty because their family has not been able to claim child disability welfare benefits while they wait for a paediatrician to diagnose their conditions.
- Suffering huge emotional damage because of the anxiety waiting for appointments, tests and treatment for what can feel like a significant portion of their life.

Dr Ronny Cheung, the college's officer for health services, said: "While these results are not a surprise to me as a consultant paediatrician, they are still a sobering read."

The Department of Health and Social Care have been approached for response.

M&S recruits AI fashion adviser in effort to boost online sales

Sarah Butler

Marks & Spencer is using artificial intelligence to advise shoppers on their outfit choices based on their body shape and style preferences, as part of efforts to increase online sales.

The 130-year-old retailer says it is using the technology to personalise consumers' online experience. Stephen Langford, the company's online director, said M&S was deploying AI to adapt the language used to address shoppers, tailored to six different preferences – such as those who prefer emotional, descriptive language, or more straightforward prose.

One of its aims is to personalise online interactions with shoppers, he said, such as prioritising products most relevant for an individual. Male shoppers are less likely to be offered the latest deals on bras, for example.

Shoppers can also opt to fill out a quiz about their size, body shape and style preferences to receive relevant outfit ideas created by M&S's AI-driven technology. Langford said 450,000 M&S shoppers so far had used the quiz, which can pick outfits from 40m combinations.

The service combines the information provided by the shopper with the company's in-house stylists' ideas about which types of garment may go together.

Richard Price, the managing director of clothing and homewares for M&S, said it was "turbo-charging online" with the aim of making half its fashion sales digital by 2028, from about a third now.

450,000
Number of customers who have used an online M&S questionnaire about body shape and preferences

The revitalised retailer, which has 240 full stores and 325 food outlets, reported a 41% jump in profits last year, while sales rose 9.4% to £13bn.

Online fashion and homewares sales rose by 7.8% last financial year, helping M&S attract 1 million more customers last year, two-thirds of whom came via the internet.

The increase in online sales has partly been driven by an 80% rise in spending on social media advertising year-on-year, with the firm now spending more on the likes of Instagram than on TV. Almost a third of its revenue generated via TikTok now comes from new customers.

World







◀ *Lviv residents at the scene of a Russian rocket and drone attack on the western city that killed seven and injured 53. Above and right, residential buildings and vehicles damaged in the attack*

Ukraine's foreign minister quits in cabinet reshuffle as Lviv is hit

Shaun Walker *Kyiv*
Luke Harding

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, has resigned as part of a wide-ranging government reshuffle designed to give what Volodymyr Zelenskiy has called "new strength" to the embattled country.

Kuleba's departure – announced in a handwritten note – came as Russia continued its relentless air barrage.

At least seven people died in a missile strike in the western city of Lviv, with 53 injured. Andriy Sadovyi, the mayor of Lviv, said three of the seven dead were children. The attack took place in Lviv's historic centre, usually considered a safe haven.

Sadovyi posted a photo of a family killed in their home: a mother, Yevheniya Bazylevych, and her three daughters, Yaryna, Daryna and Emiliya. Their father, Yaroslav, was the only survivor. Rescuers treated his injuries as he stood in the street outside their ruined apartment.

The mayor said Yaryna – who was 21 – had worked in his office on a youth project. Her 18-year-old sister Daryna was a second-year student at Lviv's Catholic University. Firefighters found the body of Emiliya, nine, buried under rubble.

"Russia used missiles and drones to attack people in their homes while they were sleeping at night. Ordinary homes, schools, and hospitals were hit," Kuleba posted on X shortly after announcing his resignation.

He added that heritage buildings in Lviv's Unesco-protected zone, were also damaged in "Russia's war crime against civilians". A further six people were hurt yesterday in another Russian attack on Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskiy's home city.

Several European foreign ministers praised Kuleba. They included Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister, who said he had put the people of Ukraine before himself. She recalled their "long conversations on night trains, at the G7, on the frontlines, in Brussels, in front of a bombed-out power plant".

Speaking in a video address on Tuesday evening, Zelenskiy said he was refreshing his team in anticipation of "an extremely important autumn". He promised "a slightly different emphasis" in foreign and domestic policy.





▲ *Yevheniya Bazylevych and her three daughters, Yaryna, Daryna and Emiliya, who were all killed in a missile strike on Lviv. Her husband, Yaroslav, also pictured, survived the attack. Right, Dmytro Kuleba, who resigned as foreign minister in a reshuffle billed as giving 'new strength' to Ukraine*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRIY SADOVYI

There was speculation that Andriy Sybiha, the deputy head of the office of the president of Ukraine, was likely to replace Kuleba. Sybiha is a veteran diplomat who has served as ambassador to Turkey and at Ukraine's embassy in Poland. He works under Andriy Yermak, the head of Zelenskiy's office.

Several ministers in Kyiv have already submitted letters of resignation, and a presidential aide has been dismissed. It is the biggest shake-up of senior officials since the beginning of Russia's 2022 invasion, and had been expected for months.

The reshuffle has been portrayed as a political "reset" engineered by Zelenskiy and his close circle before winter, which is expected to bring electricity shortages after Russian strikes on critical infrastructure and difficult news from the front.

Zelenskiy said in a Tuesday evening address that changes would be made to strengthen the government. He said: "The autumn will be extremely important for Ukraine. And our state institutions must be set up so that Ukraine achieves all the results that we need … We must strengthen some areas in the government, and personnel decisions have been prepared."

Yesterday he held talks with the Irish prime minister, Simon Harris, who was visiting Kyiv. The two leaders signed a bilateral deal and Zelenskiy thanked Ireland for taking in more than 100,000 Ukrainian citizens.

Other senior ministers who submitted resignations were Olha

Tourism levy
New Zealand triples entry fees for visitors
Page 23

'Crime doesn't pay'
Former drug lords start podcast in Rio
Page 25







PHOTOGRAPHS: ROMAN BALUK/REUTERS; YURIY DYACHYSHYN/AFP; ANASTASIA SMOLENKO/GETTY IMAGES

Stefanishyna, the deputy prime minister in charge of leading Ukraine's push to join the EU, and Oleksandr Kamyshin, the minister for strategic industries, who oversees arms production and development. The justice minister, Denys Maliuska, and the environment protection minister, Ruslan Strilets, stepped down too.

Ukraine's parliament, the Rada, approved the changes yesterday, clapping Maliuska and other outgoing ministers. Some of those resigning are expected to get new posts in government. Kamyshin was reappointed yesterday as a strategic adviser.

Speaking earlier David Arakhamia, the head of the Servant of the People party's parliamentary faction, the largest in the Rada, said a "major government reset" was under way. "More than 50% of the cabinet of ministers' staff will be changed," he said, adding that there would be a "day of appointments" after "a day of dismissals".

Orysia Lutsevych, the head of the Ukraine forum at the thinktank Chatham House, said Kuleba's departure had been expected. He would almost certainly get another top post, probably as a senior ambassador "somewhere abroad", she predicted.

Lutsevych said some other personnel changes were less explicable. "It's a pattern whenever Zelenskiy dismisses ministers. He is very mysterious and brief. There is a problem with communications. It creates speculation about why this happens."

She added: " What is disconcerting is when some effective leaders, people with good reputations, are being dismissed."

UN polio campaign in Gaza reaches 189,000 children

Peter Beaumont

The United Nations children's agency has said that a polio vaccination campaign to inoculate more than 640,000 children in Gaza is surpassing expectations at the end of the first phase of the programme.

Describing the campaign as a "rare bright spot" in almost 11 months of war, Unicef said that 189,000 children had been reached so far as more than 500 teams were deployed across central Gaza this week.

It said Israel and Hamas had observed limited pauses in the fighting to facilitate the campaign, with UN agencies involved now hoping to expand the campaign to the harder-hit north and south of the territory.

The campaign was launched after Gaza had its first reported polio case in 25 years - a 10-month-old boy, now paralysed in the leg. Health experts have warned of disease outbreaks in the territory, where the vast majority of people have been displaced, often multiple times, and where hunger is widespread. Hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into squalid tent camps with few public services.

The vaccinations were being undertaken even as fighting continued in Gaza, with the territory's Hamas-controlled health ministry saying 42 people had been killed over the past 24 hours and 40,861 people since the war began.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of Unrwa, the main UN agency for Palestinian refugees, wrote yesterday: "Great progress! Every day in the Middle Areas of #Gaza, more children are getting vaccines against #Polio."

"While these polio 'pauses' are giving people some respite, what is urgently needed is a permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the standard flow of humanitarian supplies including medical and hygiene supplies," he posted on X.

Despite the success of the polio campaign, diplomatic efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire, release hostages held in Gaza and return many Palestinians jailed by Israel, have faltered.

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, insisted on Monday that Israeli troops would remain in the Philadelphi corridor on the southern edge of Gaza bordering Egypt, one of the main sticking points in reaching a deal. However, Ron Dermer, the country's strategic affairs minister, appeared to suggest yesterday that Israel may be prepared for a full withdrawal in a negotiated second phase of any deal.

> *'Great progress ... What is urgently needed is a permanent ceasefire'*
>
> **Philippe Lazzarini**
> *Head of Unrwa*



▲ *A child is vaccinated for polio in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, the first area to receive treatment for the disease* PHOTOGRAPH: EYAD BABA/AFP/GETTY

Speaking to Bloomberg, Dermer said: "In phase one, Israel is going to stay on that line until we have a practical solution on the ground that can convince the people of Israel that what happened on 7 October will not happen again.

"And once you've concluded those negotiations, while you're in a ceasefire for phase one, in order to get to phase two and a permanent ceasefire, that's when you can discuss long-term security arrangements on the Philadelphi corridor."

Hamas, which wants any agreement ending the war to include a withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, says such a condition, among some others, would prevent an accord. Netanyahu says the war can only end when Hamas is eradicated.

The impasse is frustrating Israel's international allies and the 15 members of the UN security council.

Samuel Žbogar, the UN envoy from Slovenia and the council's president for September, said on Tuesday that patience was running out and the global body would probably consider taking action if a ceasefire could not be brokered soon.

The senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters that the only way a deal could be reached was if Israel agreed to a US proposal on 2 July, endorsed by the security council, and accepted by the group. Israel and Hamas blame conditions added by each other for the failure to clinch a deal.

Yesterday, the German government spokesperson Wolfgang Büchner said the recent killing of six Israeli hostages "has made clear that a ceasefire that opens the way to the freeing of all hostages must have the highest priority".

Additional reporting by agencies

US charges top Hamas leaders over 7 October attack on Israel

Reuters
Associated Press

The US has announced criminal charges against top Hamas leaders over their roles in planning, supporting and perpetrating the 7 October attack in southern Israel.

The charges against Yahya Sinwar, the militant group's chief, and at least five others accuse them of orchestrating the attack that killed 1,200 people, including more than 40 Americans.

That attack triggered an Israeli assault on Gaza that has killed more than 40,800 Palestinians and laid waste to much of the territory.

The seven-count criminal complaint includes charges of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organisation, conspiracy to murder US nationals and conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, resulting in death.

It also accuses Iran and the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon of providing financial support and weapons, including rockets and military supplies.

"As outlined in our complaint, those defendants - armed with weapons, political support, and funding from the government of Iran, and support from [Hezbollah] - have led Hamas's efforts to destroy the state of Israel and murder civilians in support of that aim," the US attorney general, Merrick Garland, said in a statement.

"The charges unsealed today are just one part of our effort to target every aspect of Hamas's operations. These actions will not be our last," Garland said.

The complaint names six defendants, three of whom are dead. The living defendants are Sinwar, who is believed to be in hiding in Gaza; Khaled Meshaal, who is based in Doha and heads the group's diaspora office; and Ali Baraka, a senior Hamas official based in Lebanon.

The deceased defendants are the former Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who was assassinated in July in Tehran; the military wing chief Mohammed Deif, who Israel said it killed in a July airstrike; and Marwan Issa, a deputy military commander who Israel said it killed in a March strike.

Iran has blamed Israel for Haniyeh's death. Israeli officials have not claimed responsibility.

US prosecutors brought charges against the six men in February but kept the complaint under seal in the hope of capturing Haniyeh, according to a justice department official. Prosecutors decided to go public with the charges after Haniyeh's death.



▲ *Yahya Sinwar, Hamas's leader, is believed to be in hiding in Gaza*

The criminal complaint describes the massacre as the "most violent, large-scale terrorist attack" in Hamas's history. It details how Hamas operatives who arrived in southern Israel with "trucks, motorcycles, bulldozers, speedboats, and paragliders" engaged in a brutal campaign of violence that included rape, genital mutilation and machine-gun shootings at close range.

The killing of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a 23-year-old Israeli-American taken hostage by Hamas on 7 October is also being investigated.

"We are investigating Hersh's murder, and each and every one of Hamas's brutal murders of Americans, as an act of terrorism," the attorney general said.

The charges come as the White House said it was developing a new ceasefire and hostage deal proposal with Egypt and Qatar.

John Kirby, the national security spokesperson, said the recent "executions" of the six hostages underscored "the sense of urgency" in the talks.

Hamas said last night that there was no need for new ceasefire proposals, adding that it was time to put pressure on Israel.

Eyewitness





Khan Younis, Gaza
Students do their homework after lessons at a tent school built on the rubble of a house destroyed by Israeli attacks. The ruins were once the home of their teacher, Alaa Abu Mustafa, who now strives to ensure his students are not deprived of education despite the limited resources and difficult conditions.
PHOTOGRAPH: HANI ALSHAER/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

Russia accused of disinformation campaign to sway US election result

Andrew Roth
Washington

The Biden administration has accused Russia of carrying out a sustained disinformation campaign targeted at US voters and meant to influence the outcome of November's presidential elections.

In its most direct accusation of meddling by the Kremlin to date, the US government accused the state-financed RT (formerly known as Russia Today) and other Russian state-backed media of spearheading a covert campaign of disinformation promoting pro-Kremlin views laundered through their online and television networks.

The treasury department also imposed sanctions on RT's head, Margarita Simonyan, and nine other employees over the campaign of disinformation around the elections. Simonyan was a "central figure in Russian government malign influence efforts", the department said.

It also accused RT of spending millions of dollars to "recruit unwitting American influencers" in order to spread a message meant to undermine confidence in the US elections system and US foreign policy goals, including support for Ukraine.

The attorney general, Merrick Garland, condemned the alleged information campaign during a meeting of the justice department's election threats taskforce that included the FBI director, Christopher Wray, and other senior law enforcement leaders.

Garland said the US would charge two employees of RT with money laundering and violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

RT was declared a foreign agent in the US in 2017.

The state department also announced yesterday that it would limit visa issuance for some employees of Russian state-backed media and would declare the Russian state media organisation Rossiya Segodnya a foreign mission in effect acting on behalf of the Kremlin, requiring further disclosures about its employees and property in the US.

"We now know that RT, formerly known as Russia Today, has moved beyond being simply a media organisation," said Matthew Miller, a state department spokesman.

"We know that RT has contracted with a private company to pay unwitting Americans millions of dollars to carry the Kremlin's message to influence the US elections and undermine democracy."

The US government also announced a reward of up to $10m (£7.6m) for information pertaining to foreign interference in a US election.

The disinformation crackdown was first reported by CNN, before coordinated statements from the White House and the justice department, which announced a series of law enforcement actions including the charges against the RT employees.

According to Garland, the Kremlin directed Russian agencies to obtain website domains and spoof popular US news outlets such as Fox News and the Washington Post, fooling American voters into reading Kremlin-produced news content that appeared to be produced in the US.

"An internal planning document created by the Kremlin states that it is a goal of the campaign to secure Russia's preferred outcome in the election," Garland said.

He accused a Russian public affairs company, the Social Design Agency, of driving readers to the websites to "reduce international support for Ukraine, bolster pro-Russian policies and interests and influence voters in the United States".

The group "deployed influencers and paid social media advertisements" to drive traffic to the sites, he said. "They also created fake social media profiles posing as US citizens to post comments on social media platforms with links to the sites."

The accusations came a month after the White House accused Iran of leading a foreign interference campaign.

Senior intelligence and law enforcement agencies said in August that Iran was behind a hack of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, which led to campaign records being leaked to a series of US news outlets including the New York Times, the Washington Post and Politico.

CNN reported that the hackers had managed to breach the Trump campaign through the email account of a Trump ally, Roger Stone.



▲ *Vladimir Putin's regime is seeking to spread disinformation, the US says*



▲ *Kamala Harris and her running mate, Tim Walz, the Minnesota governor at a campaign event in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, one of the swing states that could tip the election in her favour* PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

Points game

Harris leads the polls but it's still on a knife-edge

Ashley Kirk

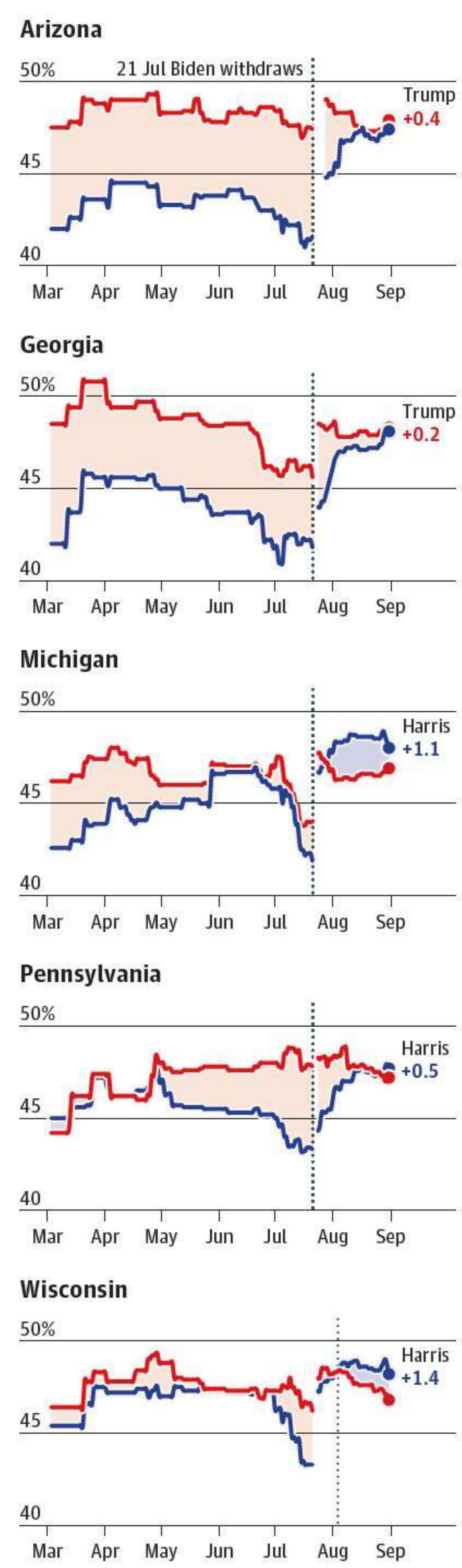
Polls for the US presidential race have been upended since Kamala Harris took over from Joe Biden to run against Donald Trump. While Biden was trailing the Republican former president nationally and in many crucial swing states, Harris has gained about three points in national polls since becoming the nominee.

The Guardian's poll tracker assesses polls over a rolling 10-day period. It now has Harris leading nationally by about two points.

But when comparing this with previous elections, data from RealClearPolitics reveals Harris's lead over Trump is weaker than those of his previous opponents. As of 30 August in their respective campaigns, Hillary Clinton led Trump by five points in 2016 and Biden was ahead of him by 6.3 points in 2020.

National polling is only part of the picture. Clinton lost the 2016 election despite winning more votes than Trump because the US election is decided by races in individual states that have a set number of electoral college votes. This means the race is decided by a handful of swing states.

Harris has made gains but is still polling neck-and-neck with Trump in swing states



Source: RealClearPolitics, data running to 31 August

Looking at data from RealClearPolitics, Harris has managed to at least close the gap on, if not overtake, Trump in the swing states. In Georgia and Arizona, Harris has gained more than four points since Biden dropped out of the race.

But Trump and Harris are still within two points of each other in seven swing states – well within the margin of error for polls.

There is another uncertainty: Trump outperformed the polls in 2016 and 2020. There were several reasons for this. A lot of people made up their minds quite late in those campaigns; many Trump voters did not tell polls who they were supporting; and methodological errors led to an underestimate of Trump support.

The errors included incorrect weighting that meant less-educated voters were underrepresented, as well as a lack of attention paid to voters' recalled voting patterns. Polling companies have sought to address these, for example by the wide adoption of education as an additional survey weight.

As things stand, the website 270toWin has seven states classed as a "toss-up". It leaves the election on a knife-edge, with the Democrats forecast to win 226 electoral college votes and the Republicans 219. If these states vote as predicted, Harris would only need to hold three of the Biden-backing swing states – Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin – to win with 270 electoral college votes. Trump would need to flip at least two states to win.

This leaves 93 electoral college votes as too close to call. So, while Harris can be pleased with the momentum her campaign has enjoyed over the past month, the election is still far from a done deal.

‘Now people must listen’

The children behind Korea’s landmark climate victory



▼ *Jeah Han outside the Seoul court that ruled the country’s laws were failing to protect future generations*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP/GETTY

Raphael Rashid
Seoul

Hannah Kim, eight, was just starting primary school when she joined the “baby climate litigation” action to force South Korea’s government to protect the rights of future generations against the dangers of the climate crisis.

Now, with high school still some way off, she is toasting success after playing her part in winning a four-year legal battle that has set a significant precedent for climate-related legal action in Asia.

“I was so happy when the verdict came out, but Mum cried,” Hannah says. Her mother, Sujin Namgung, describes how Hannah “was smiling so widely that all her teeth were showing” in the courtroom when the decision was announced.

But for Hannah, the legal victory is just the beginning. “The constitutional court listened to the voices of children and adolescents. The national assembly and the government must also listen to our voices,” she says.

Hannah, from Seongnam city, believes the entire world has to develop a detailed plan to reduce greenhouse gases, “and we will watch and shout to see if that promise is kept”, she adds firmly.

Last week’s ruling by South Korea’s constitutional court marked a significant victory for climate action in Asia. In a unanimous decision, it found parts of South Korea’s climate law unconstitutional for failing to protect the rights of future generations and passing an excessive burden to them.

The ruling now requires the national assembly to set legally binding greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2031-49 by February 2026. The government issued a statement saying it plans to implement follow-up measures.

Jeah Han, 12, from Seoul, was also part of the lawsuit and says she has felt the direct effects of the climate crisis. “Typhoons have prevented me from going to school, and changing weather often cancels my favourite physical education classes,” she says.

She has been involved in climate activism since she was 10, and tried various activities such as litter picking and reducing plastic use, but felt disheartened: “No matter what I did, it seemed like the world wasn’t changing for the better.”

Jeah believes carbon reduction goals “should be set more firmly and meticulously than now”. Quoting the country’s constitution, she says: “All citizens have dignity and the right to pursue happiness, but the government does not respect our basic rights.”

South Korea’s climate litigation began in March 2020 when Youth 4 Climate Action, a group leading the Korean arm of the global school climate strike movement, filed the first lawsuit. Subsequently, three additional lawsuits were consolidated, bringing the number of plaintiffs to 255.

Now a full-time activist with Youth 4 Climate Action, Hyunjung Yoon, 19, sees the court’s decision as a turning point. “Until now, Korea has responded to the climate crisis as if setting targets alone was a success,” she says. “The government never considered how the risks are actually growing or how people’s lives are affected. We need to focus on safeguarding our rights, not just hitting numbers.”

Hyunjung believes the young people’s legal action has laid a foundation for future progress.

“We’re not just raising awareness about the severity of the climate crisis. We’re fighting to prevent people’s lives from disappearing because of it. We don’t want a world where only those with the capacity to be safe survive. We’re striving for a society that controls risks and ensures safety for everyone, without excluding anyone.”



◀ *Mount Taranaki, the second highest mountain in the North Island. More than 3.2 million tourists visited New Zealand last year*
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

New Zealand triples entry fees to cushion impact from tourism

Guardian staff

New Zealand will nearly triple entry fees for tourists, the government has said, spurring criticism from the tourism sector that the higher levy will deter visitors.

The government said in a statement on Tuesday it would increase the international visitor and conservation and tourism fees starting on 1 October to NZ$100 (£47) from NZ$35 to “ensure visitors contribute to public services and high-quality experiences while visiting”.

Australians and travellers from most Pacific nations are exempt from the levy. Like many popular tourism spots, New Zealand has struggled with the impact of large numbers of tourists on the natural environment.

The $35 fee was introduced in July 2019, but this was not sufficient to cover the costs associated with so many visitors. The government said the fee was competitive and it was confident New Zealand would continue to be seen as an attractive visitor destination.

The tourism minister, Matt Doocey, said the levy ensures that “international visitors contribute to high-value conservation areas and projects, such as supporting biodiversity in national parks”.

The country’s Tourism Industry Association believes the higher fees will discourage visitors, especially as the sector, once New Zealand’s biggest export earner, is still struggling to recover from border closures during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rebecca Ingram, the association’s chief executive, said: “New Zealand’s tourism recovery is falling behind the rest of the world, and this will further dent our global competitiveness.”

More than 3.2 million tourists visited New Zealand last year, including 1.3 million Australians.

The top markets that will be affected by the tourism levy include the US, China, UK, India, South Korea and Germany, which together contributed 1 million tourists last year.

Data from the official data agency Stats NZ showed that travel export receipts for the year ended 30 June were at NZ$14.96bn, down 5% from prior to the pandemic, with visitor numbers roughly 80% of levels before the border closures.

Breakdancer ‘Raygun’ says sorry over Olympic display

Cait Kelly

Rachael “Raygun” Gunn has apologised to the breaking community while stating that her “record speaks” to being Australia’s best B-girl, in her first interview since her controversial appearance at the Paris Olympics.

The Australian breakdancer (pictured) was eliminated from the B-girl event with a score of zero for her performance that included hopping like a kangaroo and flailing on the floor.

Speaking on Australian Network 10’s The Project chatshow, Gunn, 36, addressed disapproval from within the breaking community and criticism she had damaged the sport.

“There’s been very angry and awful responses, not only attacking me but attacking my husband, attacking my crew, attacking the breaking and street dance community in Australia, my family,” she said.

“I am very sorry for the backlash that the community has experienced, but I can’t control how people react.”

Asked if she thinks she is the best Australian female breaker, she said: “My record speaks to that.”

Additional reporting
Australian Associated Press



NOTICE OF ACCEPTANCE OF AN APPLICATION FOR A DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER BY THE PLANNING INSPECTORATE (ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT) UNDER SECTION 56 OF THE PLANNING ACT 2008

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

REGULATIONS 8 AND 9 OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (APPLICATIONS: PRESCRIBED FORMS AND PROCEDURE) REGULATIONS 2009

REGULATION 16 OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017

Notice is hereby given that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has accepted an application ('the Application') by North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited ('the Applicant') (company number 12435947 and registered office at Windmill Hill Business Park, Whitehill Way, Swindon, SN5 6PB) for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') under the Planning Act 2008 ('the Act'). The Application (reference number: EN010119) was submitted by the Applicant to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate on 26 July 2024 and accepted for examination on the 22 August 2024.

Summary of the Application

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm (the 'Project' or 'North Falls') will comprise an offshore generating station with a capacity exceeding 100 megawatts (MW). The Project is therefore classified as a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) under sections 14(1)(a) and 15(3) of the Act and requires development consent in accordance with section 31 of the Act. It is for this reason that the Application falls within the remit of the Secretary of State's decision-making powers.

North Falls is an offshore wind farm located in the outer Thames Estuary. The DCO Application is for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of an offshore wind farm proposed approximately 40km off the East Anglia coast in the southern North Sea. The Project comprises: a single offshore array area covering an area of 95 square kilometres with up to 57 wind turbine generators, the installation of underground cables and associated infrastructure; construction of up to two offshore substation platforms, or, up to one offshore substation platform and up to one offshore converter platform; the construction of up to two cable circuits and associated ducting with the onshore landfall taking place at between Clacton-on-Sea and Frinton-on-Sea; the construction of an electrical substation between Little Bromley and Ardleigh to connect to National Grid's proposed East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) substation; and all associated development and ancillary works. The Application provides for three options for the transmission of the electricity generated by the wind farm as follows:

- Option 1: Onshore electrical connection at a National Grid connection point within the Tendring peninsula of Essex, with a project alone onshore cable route and onshore substation infrastructure;
- Option 2: Onshore electrical connection at a National Grid connection point within the Tendring peninsula of Essex, sharing an onshore cable route and onshore cable duct installation (but with separate onshore export cables) and co-locating separate Project onshore substation infrastructure with Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm; or
- Option 3: Offshore electrical connection, supplied by a third-party.

The onshore infrastructure works required under Options 1 and 2 above would be within the administrative area of Essex County Council and Tendring District Council.

The DCO, if granted, would enable the acquisition of land, new rights over land and the imposition of restrictions that are required to construct, operate and maintain the Project. In addition, it contains powers for the possession and use of land on a temporary basis to facilitate the construction and maintenance of the Project. The DCO would also authorise alterations to the layout of streets, the construction of accesses to the Project, the temporary stopping up of public rights of way, street works, removal of hedgerows and the application and modification of legislation.

Maps showing the onshore and offshore locations of the Project that form part of the Application are titled Location Plan (Onshore) (Document Reference: 5.1) and the Location Plan (Offshore) (Document Reference: 5.2) both of which can be viewed on the Planning Inspectorate's website under the documents tab:

https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010119/documents

Environmental Impact Assessment Development

The Project is an Environmental Impact Assessment Development ("EIA Development") for the purposes of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The Application is therefore accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

Copy of the application form and accompanying documents

The application form, and all accompanying documents (including the Environmental Statement, Non- Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement, a Guide to the Application and draft DCO), can be viewed electronically and downloaded free of charge on the Planning Inspectorate's website under the documents tab:

https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010119/documents

The Application documents will be available online on the Planning Inspectorate's website for the duration of the pre-examination and examination stage and will also be accessible online in the locations set out below until at least the end of the representation period (closing on 18 October 2024). The locations listed below have public internet access, through which the Application documents can be accessed on the Planning Inspectorate's website free of charge. Please check directly with the facilities to confirm their opening hours, as well as any bookings or registrations that might be required to access the documents digitally through the computers available at the respective locations.

Location	Address	Opening Times
West Clacton Library	Jaywick Lane, Clacton-on-Sea CO16 8BE	Monday to Friday, 9am to 4:30pm
Felixstowe Library	Station Road (opposite the Town Hall), Clacton-on-Sea CO15 1SF	Monday and Sunday, 10am to 4pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5:30pm Wednesday, 9am to 7:30pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Clacton Library	Station Road (opposite the Town Hall), Clacton-on-Sea CO15 1SF	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5:30pm Wednesday, 9am to 7pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Frinton Library	59 Old Road, Frinton-on-Sea CO13 9DA	Tuesday and Friday, 9am to 5:30pm Thursday, 9am to 7pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Greenstead Library	Hawthorn Avenue, Colchester CO4 3QE	Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 9am to 5:30pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Manningtree Library	High Street, Manningtree CO11 1AD	Tuesday, 9am to 5:30pm Wednesday, 9am to 1pm Thursday, 1pm to 7pm Friday, 9am to 1pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Wivenhoe Library	104/6 High Street, Wivenhoe CO7 9AB	Tuesday, 2pm to 7pm Thursday, 9am to 5:30pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm
Harwich Library	Upper Kingsway, Dovercourt, Harwich CO12 3JT	Monday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5:30pm Tuesday, 9am to 7pm Saturday, 9am to 5pm

The full suite of Application documents can be made available in printed format on request to the Applicant at a cost of up to £10,000. Requests for alternative formats (for example, large print or braille formats) or specific individual documents will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For all document requests, please contact the Applicant using the details at the end of this notice.

Making a relevant representation on the Application

Any person may make a relevant representation on the Application to the Secretary of State (i.e. giving notice of any interest in or objection to the Application). Any representation relating to the Application must be submitted on a registration form and give the grounds on which it is made.

The period for making representations starts on **11 September 2024** and will end at **11.59pm on 18 October 2024**. Please note that any submitted representations to the Planning Inspectorate will be published on the National Infrastructure Planning website for the Application. The Registration and Relevant Representation Form is available to be completed via the Planning Inspectorate's website for the Project using the web address below.

https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010119

Alternatively, you can request a hard copy of the registration / relevant representation form by telephoning 0303 444 5000 quoting the name of the Application and the Planning Inspectorate's reference number EN010119. The completed form must be received by the deadline for relevant representations. A completed hard copy form to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate should be sent to: The Planning Inspectorate National Infrastructure Planning, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN.

In submitting a representation, it should be noted that the personal data and correspondence relating to any representation will be made publicly available. If you do not wish personal data to be made publicly available, you should state why when submitting the representation. If necessary, the Planning Inspectorate will publish the representations with your name and personal data redacted, however, the representations may be given less weight during the Examination as a result. Please note that all representations submitted will be published on the Planning Inspectorate's website and will be subject to their privacy policy, found online here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-inspectorate-privacy-notices/customer-privacy-notice

The Planning Inspectorate has issued detailed advice on registering as an interested party and making a relevant representation, to which you are advised to have regard. This Advice (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: How to register to have your say and make a relevant representation) is published on the National Infrastructure Planning website under 'Detailed Information' and 'See advice notes' and can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-how-to-register-to-have-your-say-and-make-a-relevant-representation

To find out more about the Project, you can visit the Applicant's website at: www.northfallsoffshore.com

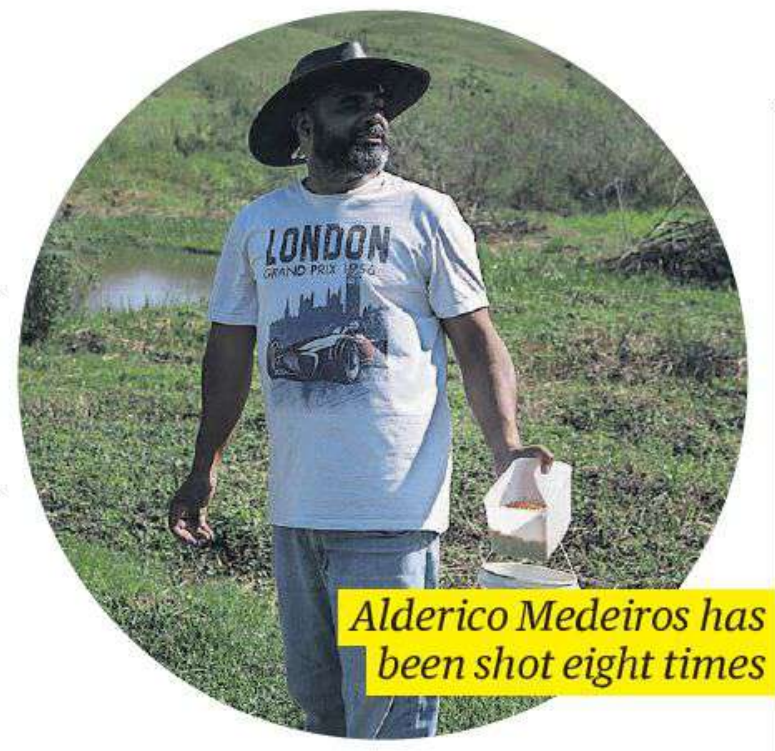
You can contact the Applicant directly with questions about the Project using the contact information below:

Email: contact@northfallsoffshore.com

Phone: 0800 254 5340

‘I’ve seen so many people die’

Drug lords turned podcasters send a message to Brazil’s youth



Alderico Medeiros has been shot eight times

Tom Phillips
Rio de Janeiro

Patrick Salgado Souza Martins sat at the crest of the hillside favela he once ruled and described the dream that changed his life.

A choir of angels surrounded the convicted Brazilian drug lord as he dozed in solitary confinement. Glistening water bubbled up from the ground. “I woke up in panic, covered in goosebumps,” said Martins, then one of Rio’s most infamous criminal minds.

Bewildered, the maximum-security prisoner opened his Bible to the Book of Isaiah. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow … But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies,” he read.

During outdoor time in the prison yard, Martins summoned his jailmates and, to their perplexity, announced he was leaving the faction. It was a decision that almost certainly saved him from becoming another statistic in Rio’s brutal four-decade drug conflict.

Now, the rehabilitated drug baron is telling his story for the first time as part of a podcast series intended to stop younger generations following the same path. “My past isn’t a good example for anyone … I’ve seen so many people die in this war,” Martins said during a tour of his former domain, a cascade of redbrick housing above one of Rio’s most expensive beach districts. In his gangster days, the 51-year-old father of 12 was known as “Patrick do Vidigal”.

The podcast 01 Sobreviventes (01 Survivors) is the work of a group of retired Rio gangsters, including Martins, who have collectively spent decades in jail for crimes including drug trafficking and kidnapping. Each week, they invite ex-offenders to tell listeners how they embraced a life of crime – and, crucially, how they escaped. “We want to teach young people that crime doesn’t pay,” said Alexander Mendes, 50, a former drug boss who came up with the idea.

Mendes, who, like Martins, was a senior member of the Rio-born Red Command faction, said he hoped to save at least 100 young lives each year by using his experiences to highlight the danger of taking up arms. “I’ve lost nine relatives in this conflict … and that’s not to mention my friends,” said Mendes, who was one of Rio’s most wanted men until his 2011 arrest in Paraguay.

The podcast paints a wretched portrait of Rio’s seemingly inexorable slide into one of the world’s most deadly urban conflicts, as assault weapons flooded the city’s deprived favelas and tens of thousands were killed.





▲ *Patrick Salgado Souza Martins above the favela he used to rule over as a drug baron in Rio. Left, Martins and fellow former criminals on his podcast, 01 Sobreviventes*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN LIMA/THE GUARDIAN

When another podcast guest, Alderico Medeiros, was growing up in a favela called Acari in the mid-1980s he remembered its kingpin, a Bob Marley lookalike nicknamed Tunicão, roaming the streets with an Uzi machine pistol. “He’d make it rain with that Uzi,” reminisced the 47-year-old, who later ran the favela for six years.



Alexander Mendes hopes to save 100 lives a year

But as the decade ended a new weapon arrived in Acari: the M16 rifle, with which Tunicão caused a “deluge of blood” and lost his life after attacking the police. By the late 90s, the favela was awash with automatic rifles and the death toll soared – claiming 80% of the gangster’s friends and, more recently, one of his sons too. “He was 22,” Medeiros said.

The former criminal, who was a member of the Third Command faction before finding God in jail, nearly died himself. “When I wasn’t getting arrested, I was getting shot. When I wasn’t getting shot, I was getting kidnapped,” said Medeiros, removing his shirt to show scars from an AK-47 shot that shattered his arm in 15 places. He was shot eight times battling rivals or police. “Just imagine my old lady’s heart,” he said.

As well as exposing the cruelty of Rio’s drug business, the true-crime podcast introduces a stranger-than-fiction rogues’ gallery of crooks who once controlled the illegal trade. No story is more astounding than that of the Frenchman nicknamed “the Gringo” who, along with Martins, ran Vidigal during the 90s. The foreigner’s true identity remains a mystery. But newspaper reports from the time say police knew him by the pseudonym João Carlos dos Santos.

According to Martins, the enigmatic French firearms expert fled to Rio after escaping from prisons in France, French Guiana and Paraguay. By the early 90s the Frenchman had become one of the seaside favela’s crime lords.

One newspaper called him “the terror of Vidigal” and accused the Frenchman of torturing an underling to death after he snitched to police.Martins said Gringo’s career unravelled when he made front-page headlines by announcing a holdup in a thick French accent. Days later, police cornered him and he blew himself up with a grenade to avoid capture.

On a recent evening, Martins stopped for a pizza near where his French accomplice died nearly 30 years earlier.

“Brother, crime doesn’t pay,” the ex-trafficker said as the nightly news described yet another day of death. A police officer had been shot in a favela in north Rio – the 19th to be killed this year. Police had killed six young men in the City of God favela, including one Martins knew. “Every day people die. It isn’t normal. But it’s life.”

In brief

Denmark

Thunberg arrested at rally against Gaza war

Danish police have arrested the environmental activist Greta Thunberg in Copenhagen at a protest against the war in Gaza, a spokesperson for the student group organising the rally has said.

Six people were detained yesterday at the University of Copenhagen after 20 people blocked the entrance to a building and three entered, police said.

Students Against the Occupation said Thunberg, 21, was one of those held. A picture of Thunberg in the newspaper Ekstra Bladet showed her wearing handcuffs and a keffiyeh. **Reuters and Agence France-Presse** *Copenhagen*

Norway

Whale alleged to be Russian spy ‘was shot’

Animal rights groups have said that gunfire killed a beluga whale that rose to fame in Norway after its unusual harness sparked suspicions the creature had been trained by Russia as a spy.

The organisations Noah and One Whale said they had filed a complaint with Norwegian police asking them to open a criminal investigation.

The white beluga was found dead on Saturday in a bay on Norway’s south-western coast. An autopsy report is expected within three weeks, the Norwegian Veterinary Institute said. **Agence France-Presse** *Oslo*

Italy

Ancient arch in Rome damaged by lightning

Lightning has struck the Constantine Arch near the Colosseum in Rome, breaking off fragments from the ancient structure, officials have said.

The pieces were immediately collected and secured by workers at the Colosseum archaeological park, authorities said. The extent of the damage, which occurred on Tuesday during a thunderstorm, was being evaluated.

The powerful storm dumped more than 60mm (2.4in) of rain on the Italian capital in less than an hour, equivalent to a month’s rainfall in autumn. **Lorenzo Tondo** *Palermo*




Over 50s Travel Insurance
with no upper age limits
24/7 English speaking emergency helpline
Unlimited medical cover available¹
Covered over 27 million travellers
Trusted for 20+ years
20% OFF²
BASE PRICES
CODE: IAG20
FEBRUARY 2024
Which? Best Buy
TRAVEL INSURANCE
JUNE 2024
Which? Best Buy
TRAVEL INSURANCE
defaqto
Travel Insurance 2011-2024
EXPERT RATED
Trustpilot
Rated Excellent
INSUREANDGO
Go without the doubt
Call our UK Call Centre FREE
0800 249 4515
InsureandGo.com

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
-28.86	-13.58	+14.23	-1638.70	1.1866	1.3160
8269.60	4518.05	40951.16	37047.61	+0.0009	+0.0067

Business

VW has 'maybe two years' to turn around slump in sales

Jasper Jolly

Volkswagen said yesterday it had "a year, maybe two" to adapt to a slump in European car sales, as it sought to justify proposals to close factories in Germany for the first time.

Separately, the Swedish carmaker Volvo said it had ditched a target to sell only electric cars by 2030, opting instead to continue selling some petrol and diesel vehicles alongside battery-powered models.

European carmakers are under pressure as they try to fund the switch from producing fossil fuel vehicles to battery models. That ambition has come up against inconsistent demand as well as increasing competition from China.

Volkswagen told workers during a meeting at its Wolfsburg headquarters yesterday that it expected to sell 500,000 fewer vehicles than it did before the Covid pandemic - "the equivalent of around two plants" - and predicted sales would not return to levels seen in 2019.

Oliver Blume, Volkswagen Group's chief executive, said he felt "emotional" about the decision to close the factories to save billions of euros in costs.

"The automotive industry has changed massively in the volume segment in just a few years," he said. "Together we will implement appropriate measures to become more profitable. We are leading VW back to where the brand belongs - that is the responsibility of all of us."

Volkswagen disclosed the plans to close down two German factories - one making cars and one components - to its works council on Monday, prompting fury from staff representatives and politicians. Workers protested against the decision as they gathered to hear from management in Wolfsburg.

> *'The industry has changed massively in just a few years'*
>
> **Oliver Blume**
> *CEO, Volkswagen Group*

The closure plans present a significant problem for the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, whose governing coalition is under severe pressure after losing an election in the state of Thuringia to Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). It was the first time a state election had been won by a far-right party since the Nazi period.

Volkswagen was second only to Japan's Toyota in 2023 vehicle sales. More than any other company, VW is emblematic of Germany's mighty automotive industry, which has been one of the forces making the country Europe's industrial heart. It employs 300,000 people in Germany out of a global workforce of 650,000.

However, Volkswagen and other European rivals were slow to embrace electric cars, which has put them at a disadvantage as rivals from China target Europe to sell their cheaper models.

Arno Antlitz, Volkswagen Group's chief financial officer, said the carmaker had "a year, maybe two years, to turn things around".

Daniela Cavallo, the company's works council chief, said that Volkswagen's management had "massively damaged trust".

The union IG Metall did not rule out strikes and said that it saw no reason to reduce wage demands in planned pay negotiations.

Cavallo said: "Management has broken a taboo in a major way, and workers are prepared to be there when we call on them." She vowed to prevent plant closures.

Volvo said it would aim for more than 90% of its global sales to be "electrified" by 2030, a definition that includes fully electric cars as well as plug-in hybrids that combine a smaller battery with a polluting petrol engine.

It said this would mean higher carbon emissions per car, with a planned drop of 75% in emissions compared with 2018 falling to 65%.

UK firms join forces to make 'gamechanger' EV micro truck

Jasper Jolly



The Evolv is designed to be allow one person to load a full pallet of goods

Two British automotive companies have teamed up to build thousands of electric delivery vehicles in Britain - the latest in a line of businesses attempting a risky push into vehicle manufacturing.

The motorsport firm Prodrive and Astheimer Design have said they plan to build 10,000 of their one-person delivery vehicles by 2030, with production planned for the UK.

Their joint venture, ELM Mobility, aims to sell the electric delivery vehicles - technically quadricycles rather than vans - for £25,000, in an attempt to find a profitable niche between cargo bikes and vans. The company has built demonstrator versions, but has yet to confirm where the finished version will be made.

Investors in British commercial vehicle manufacturers have had a turbulent time in recent years. The UK-based Arrival garnered a stock market valuation of more than $15bn (£11.4bn) but it crashed into administration this year. Volta Trucks had to be bailed out after its battery supplier collapsed, and the lorry startup Tevva fell into administration in June.

Prodrive, owned by David Richards, a former Formula One team boss, and Astheimer, owned by its co-founder, designer Carsten Astheimer, have worked with Volta Trucks to design and build prototypes on a small scale. ELM's bosses think they have learned from their predecessors' mistakes. Rather than taking on the big players by producing vans or cars, they believe there is a gap in the quadricycle market.

Quadricycles are lighter, smaller vehicles, with weight limits set in the UK and Europe. ELM's prototype meets the "heavy quadricycle" classification, meaning it must weigh less than 600kg, excluding batteries.

Iain Roche, a co-leader of ELM, said delivery firms have said they want a small, energy-efficient vehicle capable of carrying a standard pallet of goods, which would speed up "last-mile" deliveries without the need for heavier, more expensive vans.

> **£25,000**
> *Sale price ELM Mobility plans for the Evolv, in an effort to find a niche between cargo bikes and vans*

"The customer base is really dissatisfied," said Roche, pointing to rickety vehicles that he says are often out of service. "If you can get a full-height pallet on a [quadricycle], it's a gamechanger."

ELM's vehicle, Evolv, saves weight by "shrink-wrapping" the cab around the driver but also has a pallet lifter so that a single person can load it.

Rather than copying Arrival's model of making its own components, Roche said ELM will rely as much as possible on standard parts so it can benefit from technology developments and falling prices.

Two oligarchs under sanctions hold stake in UK North Sea oil producer

Jillian Ambrose

The government faces criticism after a company backed by two Russian oligarchs hit by sanctions was allowed to become a part-owner of the UK's largest North Sea oil producer.

Critics of the decision to allow LetterOne, the investment company part-owned by oligarchs Mikhail Fridman and Petr Aven, to acquire almost 15% of Aberdeen-based Harbour Energy, warned that oligarchs should have no place owning critical national assets.

LetterOne, which is not itself under sanctions, received shares in Harbour after the North Sea company completed a £8.5bn deal to buy the German company.

LetterOne's shares in Wintershall were exchanged for shares in Harbour, which has been a vocal critic of the government's windfall tax. Harbour is expected to expand its oil and gas production beyond the UK by half a million barrels of oil a day as a result of the deal.

Under the terms of the acquisition LetterOne, chaired by Lord Mervyn Davies, a former Labour government minister, will receive a share of Harbour's profits paid as dividends.

Fridman and Aven are still major shareholders, but their stakes were frozen amid sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

At the time Davies said the pair would no longer have any influence over the business or its investments, which include voting rights related to Harbour Energy, or receive dividends, funds or economic resources.

In December 2022 the UK government used the National Security and Investment Act to order LetterOne to sell its stake in regional broadband provider Upp, saying its ownership was a national security risk.

A LetterOne spokesperson said the company was "proud to be part of a bigger, stronger UK energy business" that would "bolster energy security, increase investment and create jobs".

Harbour declined to comment.



▲ *Mikhail Fridman, left, and Petr Aven part-own investor LetterOne*

Business view
Nils Pratley



The 'British Isa' was a pointless, complicated faff for little gain. Reeves is right to get rid of it

Were you preparing to do your patriotic duty by investing in a "British Isa", that late-in-the-day invention of Jeremy Hunt when the last government was scratching around for ideas to perk up the UK stock market? Tough: it looks like you won't have the chance.

Rachel Reeves is poised to kill the Brit Isa before a launch, reports the FT, on the grounds that its design was too damn complicated. The new chancellor is correct; Hunt's version was a muddle. If the aim was to boost investment flows into UK-listed companies, it would have been a lot of faff for little gain.

By way of reminder, Hunt's idea was to give savers a £5,000 top-up allowance in their tax-free individual savings accounts to be invested solely in UK shares. The core Isa (current maximum: £20,000) would have continued without geographical limitations; it was just the extra helping that would have been Brit-only.

One could see immediately that the top-up element would have been relevant only to those savers who are sufficiently wealthy to max out their £20,000 allowance in any year. That is about 800,000 people and, even if they all found another £5,000, the grand total of extra cash going to the UK stock market would have been £4bn.

That's not an insignificant sum, even if it is equivalent to only 0.2% of the £2tn-plus value of the UK stock market. But the real number would have been lower because chunks of the £20k portions already go into shares in, say, AstraZeneca or Lloyds Banking Group or UK-focused investment trusts. In those cases, no new UK-only incentive would have been created; savers would have carried on as before, just with a bigger overall tax-free allowance.

If a chancellor wanted to move the dial seriously with a Brit Isa, only more radical versions looked likely to do the job. Why not make the entire allocation UK-only?

Alternatively, the thinktank New Financial suggested at the time, increase the allowance to £25,000 and make 50% of it UK-only. It calculated such a design could have generated an extra £10bn a year of flows into UK equities, which starts to sound like serious money. The model would also have chimed with the original 50% UK threshold for UK investment when Nigel Lawson introduced personal equity plans, the predecessors to Isas, in 1986.

There's no hint that Reeves will adopt either of the radical designs, it should be said (and she doesn't sound overly keen on tax-free allowances anyway, a cynic might say). But she's right to scrap Hunt's pointless creation.

Barratt profits plunge 75% amid fall in new home completions

Kalyeena Makortoff

Barratt Developments has suffered a 75% drop in annual profit and a double-digit decline in home completions after a challenging year for Britain's biggest housebuilder.

The company said yesterday that the past year had proved tough for the housebuilding industry and potential buyers, as cost of living pressures, much higher mortgage rates and weak consumer confidence weighed on the market.

Those factors hit Barratt's annual pre-tax profits, which tumbled 75% to £171m in the year to the end of June, down from £705m a year earlier.

Barratt said it had completed 14,004 new homes over the period. While that was at the upper end of the company's expectations, it marked an 18.6% fall on a year earlier, when it completed more than 17,200 homes.

It also warned that the figure was likely to drop further to between 13,000 and 13,500 homes over the next full financial year. Barratt's London-listed shares fell by 1.65%.

The company tried to inject some optimism into the gloomy results, suggesting the Labour government's planning reforms could boost activity across the industry.

Ministers have pledged to reintroduce mandatory housing targets, and take swift action to clear bureaucratic backlogs to boost housebuilding as part of a wider overhaul.

"We welcome the government's proposed reforms of the planning system as key to both unlocking economic growth and tackling the chronic undersupply of new homes," Barratt said in a statement.

Barratt also vowed to press on with its £2.5bn takeover of rival Redrow despite concerns from the Competition and Markets Authority, which found that the merger could disadvantage homebuyers in the area around a town in Shropshire.



▲ *Barratt completed 14,004 homes, 18.6% down on the year before*

Down the tubes
A steel tube tower under construction at a factory in Jiangsu. China's growth prospects have worsened owing to weaker levels of consumer spending and a deflating property bubble.

PHOTOGRAPH: AFP/ GETTY IMAGES



Banking fraud

Why is the regulator slashing maximum refund to victims?

Rupert Jones

Consumer groups have attacked a regulator's decision to cut the planned maximum sum banks will have to refund to UK fraud victims from £415,000 to £85,000. One said it meant some people would have their lives "destroyed".

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) has confirmed it is launching a consultation on a reduced cap, which would take effect on 7 October, despite having previously said that a maximum of £85,000 was too low as it would "exclude a significant number of victims".

The decision means that hundreds of people a year - possibly more - will be left out of pocket, and some will face six-figure losses. The watchdog now stands accused of caving in to the demands of banks, fintechs and some politicians.

The consumer body Which? was scathing about the decision, saying that victims of high-value frauds such as investment scams and those involving people transferring large sums for a house purchase "stand to have their lives destroyed by this screeching U-turn".

It added that the regulator had concluded that those people "should be abandoned to provide a small benefit for parts of the finance industry that have been warned over their role in facilitating financial crime".

How did we get here?
Fraud in the UK payments industry has soared in recent years. Of particular concern has been a rise in scams that trick people into sending money to accounts run by criminals - known as authorised push payment (APP) scams.

Some people have had tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds stolen. In some cases the fraudsters have posed as a builder or solicitor, or an organisation such as HM Revenue and Customs.

The scammers sometimes pretend to be selling goods, services or investments that do not exist or never arrive. In other cases, victims are tricked into believing they are in a romantic relationship.

APP fraud losses totalled £459.7m in 2023, and the total number of cases climbed to 232,429, the banking body UK Finance said this year.

Many banks and financial companies have signed up to a voluntary industry code on reimbursement - but consumer organisations have previously said that the banking industry's approach to refunding victims was unfair and inconsistent.

Last year the PSR announced a shake-up designed to ensure more victims were refunded. It outlined new mandatory rules requiring banks and other payment companies to reimburse fraud victims who had been tricked into sending money to scammers, with a maximum reimbursement of £415,000 for all consumers.

What was the industry response?
Banks were not happy. Dozens of financial firms have been lobbying ever since for the proposed maximum to be brought right down, with some smaller companies claiming that a cutoff set at that level would be financially crippling for them.

Others have raised fears that the higher level could have tempted criminals to exploit the compensation system and potentially put smaller fintech companies out of business, and there had been reports that the measures had prompted concern within the former Conservative and current Labour governments.

Yesterday, the PSR said it had "listened to concerns about the reimbursement limit" and was now proposing a new maximum refund of £85,000 that would take effect on 7 October (there had been calls for this start date to be delayed but these have been rebuffed).

£459.7m
Total amount of authorised push payment fraud in 2023, with the number of cases climbing to 232,429

£85,000
Regulator's planned cap on refunds to victims of banking fraud, down from the current limit of £415,000

But didn't the PSR say that was too low?
It did. In August last year the PSR argued that £85,000 and £30,000 (another possible option) "were deemed too low, since they would exclude a significant number of victims. There would be significant harm to those victims defrauded above this amount."

In December, it warned: "A significant proportion of investment scams in particular would exceed a £30,000 or £85,000 limit. We recognise that a significant proportion of total fraud value would sit above these limits."

What is it saying now?
The PSR said it had carried out a review that found that in 2023 - out of more than 250,000 cases - there were 18 instances of people being scammed for more than £415,000, and 411 instances of being conned out of more than £85,000.

"The proposed new cap will still see over 99% of claims (by volume) covered," it said. It added that the new cap matched the Financial Services Compensation Scheme limit, "currently £85,000 and well understood by consumers".

So is it a done deal?
In theory, there is still time for yet another U-turn: the consultation on the new £85,000 cap closes on 18 September, after which the PSR will make its final decision before the end of September.

Advertisers 'not confident of brand safety' cut spending on Musk's X

Mark Sweney

More than a quarter of advertisers are planning to cut spending on X over concerns about the content disseminated on the social media platform, according to new global research.

Advertising revenue flowing to X has been in freefall since Elon Musk bought the site, formerly Twitter, for $44bn (£33bn) in October 2022.

Research conducted by the data firm Kantar, based on interviews with 18,000 consumers and 1,000 marketers around the world, has found that 26% of marketers are planning to cut back ad spend on X next year.

"Marketers are brand custodians and need to trust the platforms they use," said Gonca Bubani, a director at Kantar. "X has changed so much in recent years and can be unpredictable from one day to the next. It is difficult to feel confident about your brand safety in that environment."

Kantar has been conducting the study annually for several years and the latest figures show that the exodus is rapidly gathering pace, with 14% of marketers saying they would pull budgets this year.

Figures from eMarketer show the platform's rapid commercial decline. Its global revenues peaked in 2021 at $4.46bn, with the UK accounting for $366m, and dropped to $4.14bn in 2022.

Since Musk took over the site at the end of that year, they have more than halved, with annual revenues forecast to fall to $1.9bn by the end of this year.

The advertiser exodus is just one of the commercial headaches for Musk - who has come in for criticism over posts relating to topics including antisemitism, the recent riots in the UK and US politics - the latest of which is a ban on X in Brazil.

Brazil's supreme court voted unanimously on Monday to uphold a ban on X after the company refused to obey court orders requiring the removal of profiles accused of spreading disinformation.

The Kantar research suggests marketers' trust in adverts on X continues to decrease, from 22% in 2022 to 12% this year. Only 4% of marketers think adverts on X provide brand safety.

Last month, X moved to sue a global advertising alliance and several major companies, including Unilever, Mars and CVS Health, accusing them of conspiring to shun the social network and intentionally causing it to lose revenue.

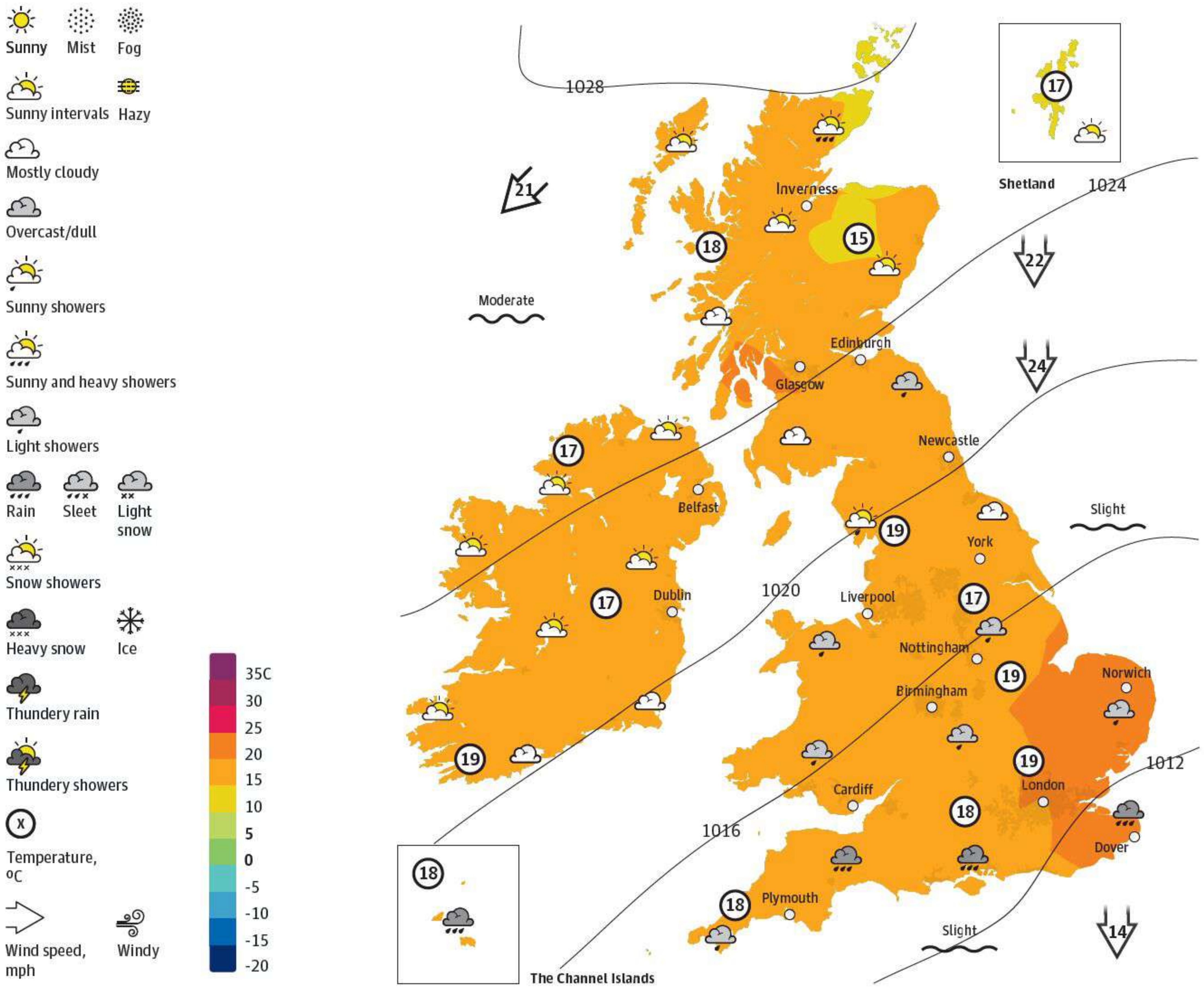
An X spokesperson said: "Advertisers know that X now offers stronger brand safety, performance and analytics capabilities than ever before, while seeing all-time-high levels of usage.

"Our brand safety rate is on average 99% as validated by DoubleVerify."

Weather

Thursday 5 September 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Low 16 High 25
Tomorrow



Low 15 High 23
Saturday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

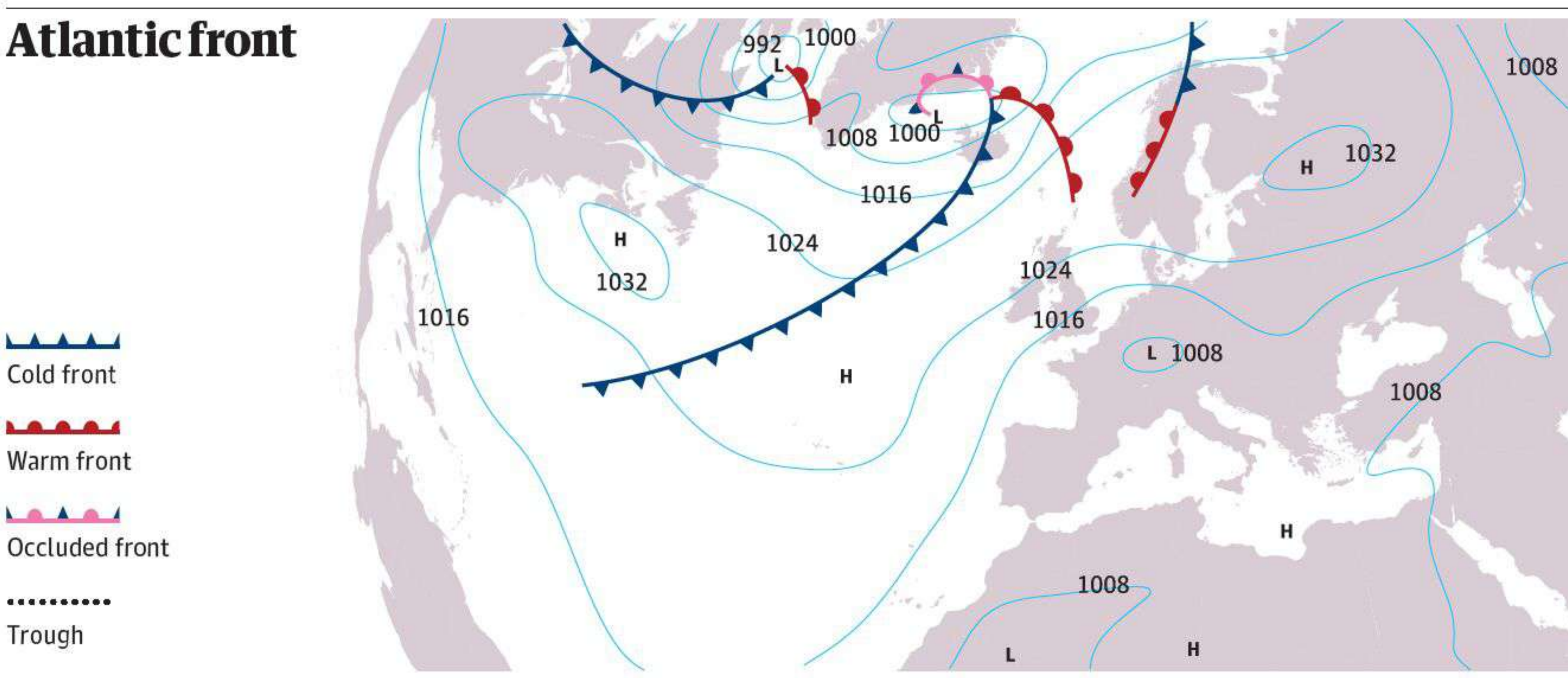
Latest	
03 Sep 2024	422.78
Weekly average	
25 Aug 2024	421.36
04 Sep 2023	419.27
04 Sep 2014	396.42
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	17 19	90%	Low
Manchester	16 18	85%	Low
Edinburgh	13 17	65%	Low
Belfast	14 18	25%	Low
Glasgow	13 20	25%	Low
Inverness	12 15	40%	Low
Leeds	14 17	85%	Low
Liverpool	15 20	60%	Low
Newcastle	13 16	55%	Low
Sheffield	14 17	65%	Low

Atlantic front

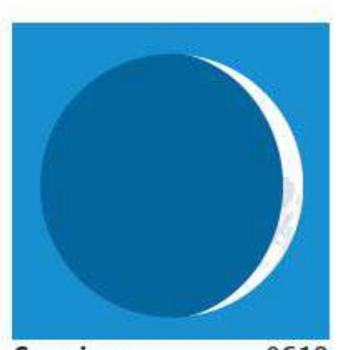


High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0317	4.3m	1543	4.0m
Avonmouth	0934	12.5m	2145	12.6m
Barrow	0120	9.0m	1340	8.7m
Belfast	0107	3.5m	1328	3.1m
Cobh	0735	3.9m	1950	3.9m
Cromer	0831	5.1m	2102	4.8m
Dover	0115	6.4m	1328	6.6m
Dublin	0120	4.0m	1341	3.7m
Galway	0726	4.9m	1938	4.9m
Greenock	0224	3.5m	1501	3.1m
Harwich	0158	3.8m	1405	3.8m
Holyhead	0012	5.6m	1231	5.3m
Hull	0821	7.3m	2046	7.0m
Leith	0441	5.4m	1659	5.3m
Liverpool	0102	9.1m	1320	8.9m
London Bridge	0408	6.8m	1618	6.8m
Lossiemouth	0150	4.1m	1414	3.8m
Milford Haven	0824	6.7m	2037	6.8m
Newquay	0714	6.7m	1928	6.8m
North Shields	0524	5.1m	1749	4.8m
Oban	0757	3.9m	2002	4.0m
Penzance	0648	5.3m	1902	5.4m
Plymouth	0759	5.2m	2007	5.4m
Portsmouth	0123	4.4m	1352	4.6m
Southport	0036	8.8m	1254	8.6m
Stornoway	0853	4.5m	2057	4.7m
Weymouth	0808	1.2m	2015	1.3m
Whitby	0601	5.6m	1825	5.3m
Wick	0116	3.5m	1338	3.2m
Workington	0125	8.1m	1344	7.9m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0619
Sun sets	1936
Moon rises	0844
Moon sets	2016
First Quarter	11 Sept

Accu Weather .com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2006 to 0642
Birm'ham	1945 to 0627
Brighton	1936 to 0623
Bristol	1947 to 0632
Carlisle	1953 to 0628
Cork	2011 to 0655
Dublin	2004 to 0644
Glasgow	2000 to 0633
Harlech	1955 to 0636
Inverness	2002 to 0629
London	1936 to 0621
M'chester	1948 to 0628
Newcastle	1948 to 0623
Norwich	1933 to 0615
Penzance	1957 to 0645

Weatherwatch

A warmer world could bring more potential for offshore wind energy, according to a new study.

Although it doesn't bear thinking about, with heating of 4C the potential offshore wind energy could increase by an average of 9% globally by the end of this century.

Previous research has indicated that global heating will reduce the potential for wind power generation, but there is uncertainty in how wind patterns will shift, and in particular how surface wind speeds will change over time.

In the new study Cheng Shen, from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and colleagues assessed offshore wind speed under different climate scenarios.

The findings, published in Geophysical Research Letters, show that the global average for offshore wind power generation could rise by between 4% and 18%, with localised increases as high as 26% over European waters by 2100.

More research is needed to understand extreme wind events and to map the changes in wind energy. Such findings will help us plan the siting of offshore windfarms, and taking advantage of additional offshore wind capacity sooner could help us to decarbonise faster. **Kate Ravilious**

Around the world

Algiers	30	Lisbon	25
Ams'dam	27	Madrid	27
Athens	32	Malaga	29
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	20
B Aires	14	Mexico C	23
Bangkok	33	Miami	33
Barcelona	27	Milan	23
Basra	45	Mombasa	28
Beijing	31	Moscow	21
Berlin	32	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	27
Brussels	23	Nairobi	23
Budapest	31	New Delhi	30
C'hagen	27	New York	25
Cairo	33	Oslo	26
Cape Town	14	Paris	18
Chicago	31	Perth	13
Corfu	31	Prague	30
Dakar	30	Reykjavik	13
Dhaka	33	Rio de J	30
Dublin	16	Rome	26
Florence	26	Shanghai	33
Gibraltar	27	Singapore	32
H Kong	32	Stockh'm	26
Harare	25	Strasb'g	26
Helsinki	26	Sydney	28
Istanbul	29	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	23	Tenerife	26
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	31
K'mandu	26	Toronto	26
Kabul	30	Vancouv'r	25
Kingston	32	Vienna	31
Kolkata	33	Warsaw	28
L Angeles	37	Wash'ton	26
Lagos	28	Well'ton	14
Lima	18	Zurich	24



Kyle Marsh and his GB teammates face Germany today

Paris 2024

Today

Weather 16°

Highlights

12.30pm
Double Dutch

Fresh from their victory in the quad doubles final yesterday, the Netherlands' Sam Schröder and Niels Vink are on opposite sides of the net today in the quad singles gold medal match. Schröder, the No 1 seed, has a ghost to exorcise at Roland Garros, having lost in the final of the French Open in June. There should be two golds for the Dutch today, with Aniek van Koot and Diede de Groot in the women's wheelchair doubles final – the pair are No 1 seeds and reigning French Open champions.

3pm
28 years of hurt

It's been 28 years since GB's men's team last made the gold medal match in wheelchair basketball. That ended in defeat by Australia and since that silver there have been four bronzes in six Games, the side unable to get back to the big one. That *should* change today – Germany are their opponents in the semi-finals, a team they swept aside 76-55 in their opening group game. The USA, taking on Canada in the other semi, are likely to await in the final.

4.30pm
Winnifrith's big chance

British interest in the pool centres on the youngest member of the squad, 13-year-old Iona Winnifrith who has her best chance of a medal in the SB7 100m breaststroke. Going into the event she is second fastest in the world this year, so a silver is within range. Elsewhere, Rebecca Redfern has hopes of gold in the SB13 100m breaststroke (6.03pm).



Iona Winnifrith: GB's youngest competitor at 13

4.50pm
Truwit in the pool

On 24 May last year Ali Truwit had just graduated from Yale and was celebrating with a break in the Turks and Caicos with her friend and fellow former Yale swim team member Sophie Pilkinton when her life changed for ever. The pair were snorkelling when a large shark attacked. "The next thing I knew it had bitten off my foot and part of my leg," she says. The pair had to swim back to their boat, 75 yards with the shark following the stream of blood. Once back on board Pilkinton tied a tourniquet round her friend's left leg and Truwit was rushed to hospital before being airlifted to Miami. Docters saved her life and as much of her leg as possible. Four months after the amputation, she texted her old swimming coach. A year on, she is in Paris with high hopes of a medal. The 24-year-old is third fastest in the world this year in the S10 400m freestyle (with the final today at 4.50pm) and has another chance in the 100m backstroke tomorrow.

6.04pm
Seventh heaven for Greaves?

Dan Greaves's Paralympic journey began as a teenager at the 2000 Games in Sydney and shows no sign of stopping. To the F44/46 discus silver he picked up in Australia, he has added another (London 2012), a gold (Athens 2004) and three bronzes (Beijing 2008, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020). That medal in Japan – earned by just 38cm over David Blair of the US in fourth – made Greaves the first British track and field athlete to win medals at six consecutive Paralympic Games. Will it be seven up today? On a big day in the field for GB, he's joined by Dan Pembroke (men's F13 javelin, 7.45pm) who is looking to continue a winning run after gold in Tokyo and golds at the 2023 and 2024 world championships. The 33-year-old is feeling confident after an impressive throw in training just prior to the Games: "It was phenomenal. I don't want to say what I threw, but it was good."
In the morning session, Funmi Oduwaiye goes in the F64 shot put (9.52am), her stronger event, after an eighth-place finish in the discus.

Today's TV

Live Channel 4 8am-6pm and 6.30pm-9.30pm
Highlights
Channel 4 10.30pm



◀ Bebe Vio launches another attack on the way to winning bronze
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Fencing

Even in defeat, Vio is one of the Palais' crowning glories

Charismatic Italian with no arms or legs delights her fans despite missing a third gold

Tanya Aldred
Grand Palais

Bebe Vio fences like she is buffeted by the storm – but she is the storm. A curling, bending, surging force, looping backwards like a high jumper, tipping forward on the attack, chair clinging to the ground by its wheel grips.

"You see the world in another way when you have the mask on," she once said. "My favourite world is with the mask on." But all worlds are fallible, and in the echoing grandeur of the Grand Palais yesterday afternoon, a dream slipped away.

As she pulled off her mask after losing her women's B foil semi-final against China's Xiao Rong 15-9, her beautiful face was screwed up in distress. There would be no third consecutive Paralympic title to add to the gold medals won at Rio and Tokyo. She slipped back into her prosthetic legs, a volunteer passed her a prosthetic arm, and she walked away, foil prosthetic still attached to her left shoulder.

Vio has no arms beyond the elbow, and no legs beyond the knee, after contracting severe meningitis aged 11. She fell into a coma and doctors removed her arms in an attempt to kill the infection. When it came to the decision to remove her legs, she took the choice out of her parents' hands, saying: "If there is 1% chance of living, let's amputate the legs."

Her passion before the illness was fencing. Her passion after the illness was fencing, but she did not see how it was possible, because a fencer's main strengths are in the fingers and the wrist. At first, she scoffed at the idea of wheelchair fencing as "for disabled people", but after a year of physio, and learning to wear her new limbs, she was back among the epees and the foils. A few months later, she won her first competition. She is the only Paralympic fencer who fights without arms and legs.

At London, she was a torch bearer, at Rio she won gold when just 19, and she did it again in front of the silent stands of Tokyo. At the opening ceremony last week, she was in the Place de la Concorde, involved in the conclusion of the cauldron-lighting. She and her parents have set up art4sport to help the physical and mental recovery of children with prosthetic limbs, and her Bebe Vio Academy helps to promote Paralympic sport. Her irrepressible spirit and huge popularity – an Instagram following of 1.3 million – have led to endorsements with Omega and L'Oréal.

The skeletal metal bones of the soaring Grand Palais make it the perfect backdrop to a sport that is forged in the sound of epee on epee, foil on foil, and the scrape of the wheelchairs in which all the athletes compete. As Vio fenced in the bronze medal contest against Cho Eun-hye of Korea, the floodlights shone down the central piste and her fans, who had flocked to the towering temporary seats hoping for a gold, stamped their feet like a thousand thunderstorms, shouting: "Bebe, Bebe."

It was a display of total dominance, beating a tearful Cho 15-2 in the time it takes to drink a quick morning espresso. She is on record as saying that she prefers wheelchair fencing to able-bodied fencing because "you cannot escape, you cannot be afraid", and there was no sign of the morning's disappointment carried into the bronze medal match.

"She [Xiao Rong] was a better fighter than me today," Vio said. "Losing a gold medal doesn't mean you lose all of them, there are other medals. Every medal is super important. I'm so happy about the result today, I'm so glad for my friends, my family, my team for waiting with me and helping me to win this medal."

And with that, the girl her scout group nicknamed Rising Phoenix – because she lived and burned and died and lived again – walked away.

In News
Storey storms to remarkable 18th Paralympic gold
Page 3 →



Coutya claims gold

**Great Britain's Dimitri Coutya won gold last night in the men's foil category B at the Grand Palais, beating China's Feng Yanke 15-7. Coutya, who was part of the Paralympic inspiration programme in 2012, took home three bronzes and a silver from Tokyo but wanted more. "It's been something I've dedicated my life to, especially for the last few years," he said. "It's all I've thought about since Tokyo because, although that was a fantastic result, I really wanted that gold medal. A lot of emotional turmoil that went into that it so for it to come to fruition tonight – it's not really sunk in yet." Coutya and Feng embraced at the end. "His speed and control of the distance is perfect so I knew I had to be spot on with how I set myself up. The beauty of fencing is that you see individual personalities reflected, he's a very tactical all-round fencer and I'm strong on the attack and I pushed it as much as I could."
Tanya Aldred**

Paralympics

Kinghorn races to gold and sets new Paralympic record

John Ashdown

Wheelchair racer Sammi Kinghorn added to GB's Paris Paralympics success with a stunning T53 100m gold at Stade de France.

Scottish athlete Kinghorn, who secured 800m and 1500m silvers in recent days, powered home ahead of Swiss star Catherine Debrunner to set a Paralympic record in 15.64sec.

The 28-year-old became the first non-Chinese athlete to win the title since Tanni Grey-Thompson 20 years ago in Athens.

Tears of joy streamed from her eyes as she greeted her family in the stands before dedicating the victory to her brother on his birthday.

"I just can't believe that I've done that," she said. "It's honestly absolutely blowing my mind. This one is definitely for my brother."

Zoe Newson had experienced the joy of bronze medals in London and Rio, then the pain of a fourth-placed finish in Tokyo, but yesterday in Paris the 32-year-old went one step further on the podium, winning silver in



▲ *Zoe Newson's fiance and son were there to see her win a silver medal*

dramatic circumstances at Porte de la Chapelle Arena.

On the first day of the powerlifting competition she attempted the final lift of 109kg she needed for second spot but was adjudged initially to have fouled. She and her team appealed and, after a tense pause, the silver medal was hers.

In the pool Poppy Maskill won her fourth medal of a hugely successful Games in the women's SM14 200m individual medley, adding another silver to the silver and two gold medals the 19-year-old from Cheshire has won in her debut Paralympics. Maskill could still make it five in the 100m backstroke tomorrow but admitted the demands of the schedule are beginning to take their toll. "It's hard work," she told Channel 4 after being pipped to the gold by Valeriia Shabalina. "I'm just going back [to the athletes' village], napping … and that's all I'm doing."

Rhys Darbey grabbed a silver in the men's SM14 200m individual medley behind Canada's Nicholas Bennett. The Welsh swimmer, in his debut Paralympics, adds the silver to the gold earned as part of the S14 mixed 4x100m freestyle team on Sunday.

There was also a silver for Alice Tai in the women's S8 400m freestyle.

Sophie Wells added a bronze in the individual Grade V dressage at Versailles, her ninth Paralympic medal at her fourth Games.

Tim Jeffery won a shooting bronze in the R9 mixed 50m rifle prone SH2 at the Châteauroux Shooting Centre. "The final was one of the hardest things I've done in a long time," the 28-year-old said.

At the Stade de France, Karim Chan narrowly missed out on a bronze in the men's T38 long jump, his effort of 6.39m just 1cm short of third-placed José Lemos, the Colombian completing an unlikely medal double having won gold in the T38 javelin last week.

Andy Lapthorne and Greg Slade had to settle for silver in the wheelchair tennis quad doubles.

Medal table

		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	China	62	46	27	135
2	Great Britain	33	25	16	74
3	USA	25	26	12	63
4	Netherlands	16	7	5	28
5	France	15	17	18	50
6	Brazil	15	15	27	57
7	Ukraine	13	18	21	52
8	Italy	13	10	23	46
9	Australia	11	12	18	41
10	Spain	7	8	17	32



▲ *Sammi Kinghorn celebrates taking 100m gold with a record time of 15.64sec*
ADAM DAVY/PA

Cricket

Hull's rise continues with call-up for final Test against Sri Lanka

Simon Burnton

Josh Hull will cap an extraordinary rise by making his England Test debut tomorrow after the 20-year-old seamer was picked for the summer's final match against Sri Lanka.

Hull replaces Matt Potts in the only change to the side that sealed a series win at Lord's last week. The 6ft 7in left-armer has played only nine County Championship games; in three matches in that competition for Leicestershire this summer he took two wickets at an average of 182.50.

He took five wickets for England Lions against Sri Lanka last month, making it the most successful game of his first-class career, and was called up to the Test squad following Mark Wood's withdrawal with injury. He could potentially make international debuts in all three formats in the space of a fortnight, having been named in both the T20 and one-day international squads to face Australia, with the first of those games to be played in Southampton next Wednesday.

"He's got a massive ceiling and he's pretty massive himself, which is pretty handy as a bowler," said Ollie Pope, whose spell as England's stand-in captain is expected to end



▲ *Josh Hull is also in the squads for the Australia ODIs and T20s*

after this match. "When you're 6ft 7in, pushing up to 85-90mph and with a bit of swing with the left-arm angle, there's a lot to like about it.

"When you have a left-arm option it's a point of difference. Obviously being a batter myself I know the impact it can have. It's tough on Pottsy, I think he's bowled his heart out this summer. It's just it was the right time to give someone a fresh opportunity and to learn something about Josh as well."

Pope said he had been impressed when he faced Hull for the first time in the nets yesterday. "He's worked closely with Jimmy Anderson last week, and Brendon McCullum's been watching him closely as well," Pope said. "That should give him massive confidence, that they think he's ready for this opportunity. Today was the first time I faced him and he bowled really nicely so I was like: 'Yeah, he's good to go.'"

England have selected a series of young bowlers since McCullum's appointment as head coach in 2022. Rehan Ahmed became the youngest man to play Test cricket for England when selected at 18 years and 126 days to face Pakistan in Karachi later that year, and the 6ft 4in spinner Shoaib Bashir made his debut in India this February, also aged 20. Hull will go into his first Test with more first-class experience than either Rehan or Bashir.

His selection in the Lions game last month means the Sri Lanka XI will be among the select few in attendance at the Oval to have seen Hull in action. "He bowled really well in that game," the opener Dimuth Karunaratne said. "In the first innings he struggled a bit but he got some bounce and he got some swing movement, and in the second innings he bowled really well. We've played against him before so we have some plans."

Karunaratne said he was not surprised England had taken another gamble on youth. "If you are good enough to play for England, you don't need to have played plenty of first-class cricket. If you perform well, you get a chance to play."

England's first training session at the Oval came less than three days after the end of the second Test at Lord's, and like all their sessions attendance was optional – Joe Root, Ben Duckett and Gus Atkinson all missed it to prioritise their recoveries from that game. Several players and coaches went on to St George's Cathedral in Southwark to attend Graham Thorpe's funeral, at which Root and Ben Stokes were pallbearers.

England team Dan Lawrence, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope (capt), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith (wkt), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Olly Stone, Josh Hull, Shoaib Bashir

Cycling

Williams lifts home hopes as Tour of Britain battle heats up

William Fotheringham



◀ *The riders ascend Saltburn Bank during stage two, which was won by Steve Williams*

Steve Williams's annus mirabilis took another turn on the seafront at Redcar, with an emphatic win on stage two of the Tour of Britain after the final 50km witnessed a ding-dong battle between Israel-Premier Tech and Soudal Quick-Step.

In the end Soudal's double world champion, Julian Alaphilippe, was unable to get past Williams after the Welshman led out the sprint in the final metres. He now wears the green leader's jersey six seconds ahead of the young Scot, Oscar Onley, who finished third behind Alaphilippe.

With the next group including Remco Evenepoel and Joe Blackmore 21sec back, the overall title should be decided between the Frenchman and the two Britons, either of whom could become the first home rider to win this race since Steve Cummings in 2016.

This has already been a stellar year for Williams, who won the Tour Down Under in January and added the Flèche Wallonne classic in April. As he noted after the finish, this is not the first time he has led a stage race, having also taken the Arctic Race of Norway and the CRO Race in Croatia.

"The key today was to be in front and, when the race opened up, be there in numbers," he said. "The tactic was to be on the front foot."

The race came alight on the roads heading up the coast from Whitby, with Evenepoel pulling Williams, Onley and Alaphilippe clear of the peloton on the climb of Lythe Bank with 48km remaining, rapidly closing on a breakaway including Blackmore.

That group split apart over the two final ascents of Saltburn Bank, with Evenepoel and Blackmore duelling before the final climb, where Williams pressed on with Onley and Alaphilippe in his wake. The big absentees were Tom Pidcock and Ineos, who had a nightmare stage reflecting the squad's current lack of momentum, with Pidcock unable to follow the favourites on Lythe Bank.

Even with the Olympic mountain bike champion out of the picture, the overall standings are dominated by home racers, including the amateur Louis Sutton, who rides for AVC Aix-en-Provence. He was the only rider from the early escape to make the final cut and lies fifth overall.

Also in the early move was the King of the Mountains, Callum Thornley, who took enough points over the stage's two first-category ascents to seal the title with four days remaining. The overall standings could see more change today with more stiff little ascents en route to Barnsley.

▼ *Caitlin Foord completes her hat-trick to help send Arsenal sailing through*
STEVEN PATSON/PA



Group 3

Saturday
Third-place playoff
Atlético Madrid v Rangers, noon

Final
Arsenal v Rosenborg, 7.30pm

Both games at Meadow Park, Borehamwood

Only winners of the final progress to round two

Women's Champions League

Foord routs Rangers as gutsy Arsenal march on

Arsenal 6
Foord 16 59 69 90, Russo 60, Little 86pen

Rangers 0

Suzanne Wrack
Meadow Park

Four goals from Caitlin Foord, an impressive competitive debut for Mariona Caldentey and progression in Champions League qualifying secured, Arsenal's 6-0 victory over Rangers opened their 2024-25 campaign confidently.

It was an entirely dominant performance in the end, but Rangers made their hosts work for the lead and for their second goal. Then Arsenal shoved the door open, with Alessia Russo scoring their third, before Foord completed her hat-trick, Kim Little converted from the spot and Foord added a fourth.

The Gunners will play Rosenborg in the second stage of their mini-tournament in qualifying round one on Saturday evening after the Norwegian side pulled off a shock defeat of Atlético Madrid on penalties earlier in the day, with the game level at 2-2 after extra time. Defeat Rosenborg, and Jonas Eidevall's side will progress to qualifying round two, where they will play one team over two legs with the victor earning a place in the coveted group stage.

There can be no complacency. "That's always my message," said Eidevall. "There's always the next game, there's always the next action, there always needs to be really high demands on everything we do. I have faults like everyone else, complacency isn't one of them."

The England captain, Leah Williamson, had said Arsenal were "left to regret" their Champions League qualifying exit last year for the rest of the season. "Everyone knows what it feels like to lose, and nobody wants to feel that again," she said.

The energy Arsenal came out with in the first half demonstrated their desire not to let this opportunity go to waste. Two seasons ago, Arsenal thrived in the group stage and built towards a battling semi-final exit at a sold-out Emirates Stadium. Not making the group stage last year, losing out on a chance to build on that and benefit from the financial and broadcast benefits, was a big blow.

Arsenal were dominant, camped in the Rangers half for much of the first half, rare forays forward by the visitors snuffed out by an organised backline of Emily Fox, Williamson, Laia Codina and Katie McCabe.

An opening goal from the home team was an inevitability but, for all their dominance in possession, they had to wait until the 16th minute. It was the new recruit, the Ballon d'Or-nominated Caldentey who provided the impetus, swinging an accurate cross in from the left that was nodded in by Foord. That was surprisingly the only goal of the half, Arsenal's 10 attempts and five corners yielding nothing more.

The second goal, which quashed any fears of Rangers spoiling things, finally arrived just before the hour, Little doing well to poke the ball through for Foord to sweep past the goalkeeper Victoria Esson.

Their resolve broken, the Scottish side were dealt another blow one minute later, with Russo collecting the ball on the edge of the box and powering it in. By the 69th minute it was four, with Foord securing her hat-trick in style.

McCabe was felled in the box by the Rangers captain, Nicola Docherty, with four minutes remaining and Little converted, while Foord fired in late on to add her fourth.

Job done, but Arsenal's 3-0 defeat of Linköping at the same stage last season was undone by their loss on penalties to Paris FC three days later. The difference? This time Arsenal have had two weeks together rather than mere days after the World Cup.

"What you can see is a great start," said Eidevall of relationships developing between the players on the pitch. "I try to reframe this great pre-season that people were on cloud nine speaking about, because we've only had the team for two weeks. The two central defenders, the backline that was playing today, have played zero minutes in pre-season together, so we are still building relationships."

Arsenal
4-3-3
Zinsberger; Fox (Wienroither 79), Williamson, Codina, McCabe; Maanum (Kafaji 70), Little, Cooney-Cross (Wälti 79); Caldentey (Kühl 87), Russo (Blackstenius 70), Foord

Rangers
4-3-3
Esson; Eddie, Hill, Rafferty (Middag 68), Docherty; Howat (Lafaix 68), McLoughlin, Hay (McAulay 46); Hardy, Wilkinson (Berry 85), Arnot

Referee Rasa Grigone (Ltu) **Attendance** 3,487

Premier League

Newcastle do not fear England move for Howe

Louise Taylor

Newcastle's sporting director says Eddie Howe is capable of leading the Saudi Arabian-owned club to football's glittering prizes and he is not overly fearful of the manager's head being turned by a potential approach from England.

"I've never been scared of interest in our head coach," Paul Mitchell said. "Especially from the Football Association. I think it's a recognition of the two and a half years he's done here and the job he did at Bournemouth. We want Eddie Howe as our head coach for as long as we can but we also recognise his quality and potential."

Although Howe is understood to feature on an FA shortlist including, among others, the interim England coach Lee Carsley, Newcastle's manager has indicated that – providing his still fairly new relationships with Mitchell and the club's new performance director, James Bunce, progress favourably – he would prefer to remain at St James' Park. "I'm excited to work with Eddie," Mitchell said. "He can go on this journey with us, however far our ambition stretches."

Despite Newcastle's failure to sign Crystal Palace's England defender Marc Guéhi after a four-week pursuit, it appears the concerns raised by Howe in July regarding Mitchell and Bunce possibly diminishing his autonomy are receding. "Eddie's smart and he knows there needs to be evolution," Mitchell said. "He's been super receptive to adding a high-level member of the team [Bunce]."

Mitchell believes he and Howe are bonding well. "We speak every night and every day on all different topics. We speak for one hour every evening. For me that's a healthy level of communication. Eddie's a super impressive coach on the grass, I'm excited to see where that takes us."

Champions League

Supporters criticise Villa over ticket prices

Nick Ames

Aston Villa have been accused of ignoring a request from their fan advisory board to cap Champions League ticket prices on the club's return to Europe's elite. Most supporters are faced with paying £70 to £97 per home game when the competition returns this month, casting a cloud over their meetings with Bayern Munich, Bologna, Juventus and Celtic at Villa Park.

The fan advisory board had asked that prices for European ties be capped at Villa's category A Premier League rates. But that did not materialise in the announcement yesterday and Villa face charges of exploiting supporters who have not seen their side compete at the highest level since the 1982-83 season, when they were knocked out of the European Cup quarter-finals by Juventus.

The Aston Villa supporters' trust said in a statement: "As part of the fans' advisory board, the AVST met with the club towards the end of last season to discuss season ticket prices including the Champions League if we were to qualify, and made clear pricing should be no higher than that of a Category A game if we did. For the club to announce Champions League prices well above this season's Category A is extremely disappointing."

For a small minority of supporters the hike will be minimal: the highest ticket price for a Premier League game at Villa Park is £92 and its equivalent in the Champions League will rise to £97. But a £55 ticket in the cheapest price bracket will become £85 for a non-season-ticket-holding adult ineligible for a concession who wants to watch Bayern Munich walk out on 2 October. Villa are understood to feel that fulfilling PSR obligations gave them little choice but to set prices at these levels.

Results

Paralympics

ATHLETICS
Women: 100m T53: 1 S Kinghorn (GB) 15:64; **2** C Debrunner (Swi) 15.77; **3** Gao F (Chn) 16.16

SWIMMING
Men: 200m Individual Medley SM14 : 1 N Bennett (Can) 2:06.05; **2** R Darbey (GB) 2:08.61; **3** R Betar (Aus) 2:08.69

Women: 200m Individual Medley SM14 : 1 V Shabalina (NPA) 2:22.40; **2** P Maskill (GB) 2:23.93; **3** A Kinoshita (Jpn) 2:25. 96. **Selected others: 4** L Fiddes (GB) 2:27.96; **6** O Newman-Baronius (GB) 2:32.50

Women: 400m Freestyle S8: 1 J Long (US) 4:48.74; **2** A Tai (GB) 4:52.24; **3** XF Palazzo (It) 5:00.13. **Selected others: 5** B Whiston (GB) 5:00.89

FENCING
Men: Foil: Category B: Gold medal match: D Coutya (GB) bt Feng Y (Chn) 15-7

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS
Men: Quad wheelchair doubles: N Vink & S Schroder (Neth/Neth) bt A Lapthorne & G Slade (GB/GB) 6-1 6-1

POWERLIFTING
Women: -45kg: 1 Guo L (Chn) 123; **2** Z Newson (GB) 109; **3** N Muratli (Tur) 108

ROAD CYCLING
Women: Individual Time Trial C5: 1 S Storey (GB) 20:22.15; **2** H Gaugain (Fr) 20:26.84; **3** A Forster (Aus) 21:00.48

Women: Individual Time Trial C1-3 : 1 M Hausberger (Ger) 21:30.45; **2** F Brown (GB) 21:46.18; **3** A Beck (Swe) 21:54.71

Women: Individual Time Trial B : 1 KG Dunlevy (Ire) 38:16.58; **2** S Unwin (GB) 39:40.18; **3** L Fachie (GB) 40:41.30. **Selected other: 6** E Jordan (GB) 42:59.54

SHOOTING
Mixed 50m Rifle Prone SH2: 1 D Ristic (Ser) 250.2; **2** V Tchintcharauli (Geo) 248.2; **3** T Jeffery (GB) 227.8. **Selected other: 5** R Cockbill (GB) 185.5

EQUESTRIANISM
Individual Event Grade V: 1 M George (Bel) 76.692; **2** R Mispelkamp (Ger) 73.231; **3** S Wells (GB) 72.257

Football

WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
First round: Semi-finals Ajax 4 Kolos Kovalivka 1 (aet); Anderlecht 4 Crvena zvezda 1; Apollon 3 Pyunik 0; Arsenal 6 Rangers 0; At Madrid 2 Rosenborg 2 (aet; Rosenborg won 3-2 on pens); Benfica 3 Nordsjælland 1; BIIK Kazygurt 3 NSA Sofia 0; Breznica L Birkirkara L; Brøndby 0 Fiorentina 1; Dinamo-BGU 1 Peamount 2 (aet); E Frankfurt 0 Sporting 2; Ferencvaros 2 Flora 1; Gintra 5 Anenii Noi 0; KuPS 1 Celtic 3; Minsk 1 Breidablik 6; Mitrovica 0 Farul 4; Osijek 2 Spartak Myjava 0; PAOK 2 Kiryat Gat 1 (aet); Paris FC 9 First Vienna 0; Racing 1 Galatasaray 4; Servette 1 Pogon Szczecin 0; SFK 2000 3 KÍ 0; Sparta Prague 3 Linköping 1 (aet); St Pölten 5 Neftci 0; Twente 7 Cardiff 0; Valur 10 Ljuboten 0; Vllaznia 3 Lanchkhuti 0; V Poltava 5 RFS 0; ZNK Mura 3 Glentoran 2

Tennis

US OPEN (Flushing Meadows, New York)
Men: Singles: Quarter-finals: F TIAFOE (US, 20) bt G DIMITROV (Bul, 9) 6-3 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 4-1 ret; **J DRAPER** (GB, 25) bt A DE MINAUR (Aus, 10) 6-3 7-5 6-2

Women: Singles: Quarter-finals: K Muchova (Cz) bt B HADDAD MAIA (Br, 22) 6-1 6-4; **A SABALENKA** (Rus, 2) bt ZHENG QW (Chn, 7) 6-1 6-2

Men: Doubles Quarter-finals: M AREVALO & M PAVIC (ElS/Cro, 4) bt N SKUPSKI & M VENUS (GB/NZ, 8) 7-6 (7-1) 6-1

Cricket

FIRST MEN'S TWENTY20 INTERNATIONAL
The Grange, Edinburgh Scotland 154-9. Australia 156-3 (TM Head 80). Australia beat Scotland by seven wickets.

VITALITY BLAST
Hove Lancashire 114. Sussex 118-2. Sussex beat Lancashire by eight wickets.

Cycling

VUELTA A ESPAÑA (Spain)
Stage 17 (Arnuero - Santander, 141.5km):**1** K Groves (Aus) Alpecin-Deceuninck 3h 32m 14s; **2** P Bittner (Cz) dsm-firmenich PostNL; **3** V Braet (Bel) Intermarche-Wanty all at same time. **Selected others: 12** M Poole (GB) dsm-firmenich PostNL; **52** A Yates (GB) UAE Emirates all at same time

Fixtures

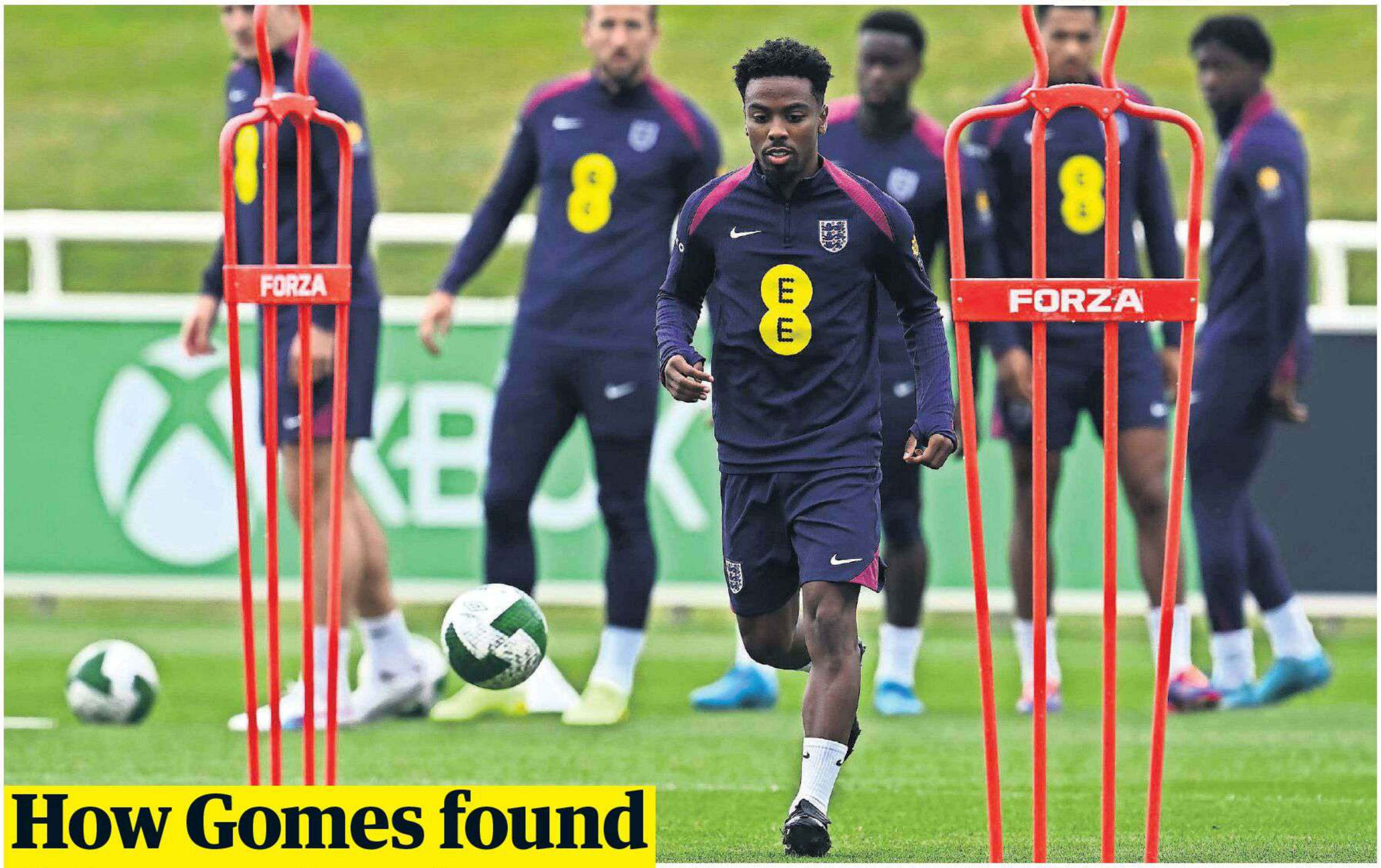
Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Nations League
A1 Portugal v Croatia; Scotland v Poland. **A4** Denmark v Switzerland; Serbia v Spain. **C1** Azerbaijan v Sweden (5pm); Estonia v Slovakia. **C3** Belarus v Bulgaria; Northern Ireland v Luxembourg. **D1** San Marino v Liechtenstein

Cricket (6.30pm)
Vitality Blast
Quarter-final Northamptonshire v Somerset, Northampton

Greg Wood's racing tips

Lingfield **2.00** Doublethetrouble **2.30** Marcus **3.00** Zariela **3.30** The Hare Rail **4.00** Poetic Jack **4.32** Surrey Fire **5.05** Con Te Partiro **5.35** Lady Dreamer
Haydock **2.10** Just An Hour **2.40** Sir Peter Fossick **3.10** Green Icon **3.40** Caledonian **4.17** Defence Minister **4.50** Elladonna **5.20** D Day Arvalenreeva
Salisbury **2.20** Edvard Grieg **2.50** Dissident **3.20** Kingsclere **3.50** Greydreambeliever (nb) **4.25** Havana Pusey **5.00** Faro Di Notte **5.30** Zealot
Newbury **4.05** Gigi Bliss **4.40** Rosa Applause **5.10** Miss Collada (nap) **5.40** Dark Mystery **6.10** Bolo Neighs **6.40** State Flag **7.10** Bright
Wolverhampton **4.55** Stella Hogan **5.25** Marmaduke Lemon **5.55** Queue Dos **6.25** Bernard Spierpoint **6.55** Glory Call **7.25** Forager **8.00** Advert Rules **8.30** Carey Street **9.00** Etretat

▼ *Angel Gomes in training for England's game in Ireland on Saturday*
PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY



How Gomes found 'big motivation' to reach England goal

Former United wonderkid, whose godfather is Nani, has rebuilt his career at Lille since leaving Old Trafford in 2020

David Hytner

So, Angel Gomes, what about a return to the Premier League? It felt logical to ask the question and the Lille midfielder, fresh from his surprise England call-up for the Nations League ties against Republic of Ireland and Finland, did not exactly rule it out.

Yes, he has had approaches, the 24-year-old admitted. "But I believe that everything will happen naturally and in its own time," he said. "I am really chilled. If it was to come up, that would make sense. You never know in football …"

Yet this is not a story about coming back - certainly not at the moment. Rather the going-away-in-the-first-place bit, Gomes's departure from Manchester United, where he had long enjoyed wonderkid status, and a remarkable career reboot.

When he joined Lille as a free agent in 2020 and immediately went on loan to Boavista in Portugal for the season, the idea of a senior England call-up had to feel fanciful. He was incredibly down at the time, describing it as his "hardest point". And the more he talked at his first press conference as a member of the England squad, the more it became apparent why.

It was not only leaving United, where he had been since the age of six - the death of a dream - but the uncertainty over what lay ahead. At least Gomes spoke the language; his father, Gil, a former footballer, is Portuguese. Gil won the Under-20 World Cup with Portugal, playing with Luís Figo. Otherwise for Gomes, it was a leap of faith.

"It was going into the unknown," he says. "I never knew how it was going to go and going to Lille afterwards … learning a new language, adapting to a new country, adapting to the football … it was a very difficult time for me."

Gomes told himself that if he dug in, if he concentrated on the small steps, then the bigger ones, such as a full England call-up, would take care of themselves. But in the background was the frustration of what he might have had.

When he came on as a substitute for United against Crystal Palace in May 2017, replacing Wayne Rooney, he became the club's youngest debutant since Duncan Edwards. Gomes was aged 16 years and 263 days but it seemed so normal, given where he was at that point, the intensity of the hype around him. He made his debut for United's under-18s as a 14-year-old. At 15, he scored a hat-trick for that team and at the end of 2016-17 he was named the club's young player of the year - the youngest recipient of the award.

And yet it did not happen for Gomes over the following three seasons, under first José Mourinho then Ole Gunnar Solskjær, a total of 10 United appearances a source of deep frustration. An indictment too, perhaps, of the club's inability to nurture and develop the one-time jewel of their academy. Gomes simply used it as fuel.

"Leaving England gave me a big motivation. There were also players that I played with in France that were going to their national teams. It gave me the motivation to know that just because I'm playing in a different league, I can still get to where I want to get to. When I left [United], it was to better myself as a player and as a person through a journey and I knew eventually that I'd be able to create a pathway. It's been an upwards trajectory [since Boavista], also with a lot of difficult moments. But being in this position now makes everything worth it."

Gomes cites the influence of Paulo Fonseca, his manager at Lille between 2022 and 2024, as decisive; Fonseca saw that he could play as a deeper-lying midfielder as well as a No 10. His manager at Boavista, Vasco Seabra, was also huge for him, restoring his belief. And then there is Lee Carsley, with whom he built such a strong relationship with the England Under-21s, which has now been reprised at senior level, Carsley giving him the call in his first selection as the interim manager.

The pair won the European Under-21 Championship in the summer of last year and it was after the semi-final against Israel that Carsley said Gomes would one day become a coach. "Probably yeah," Gomes said. "I can't hide that I like that side of the game. I like to think I am a big thinker and it is something I will probably go on to do when I finish playing."

Gomes is defined not only by his technique but his intuitive reading of the game, which makes light of the fact that he enters the midfield battle zone at just 5ft 6in. With Jude Bellingham, Cole Palmer and Phil Foden ruled out by injury and illness, the prospect of Gomes enjoying a debut over the next week has increased.

Gomes was eligible for Portugal and was asked whether there were any moves from them to secure his allegiance at senior level. Maybe from his father? Or his godfather, Nani, the former Portugal and United winger? The connection with Nani stemmed from the relationship that his father had with Carlos Queiroz; he played under him at youth level for Portugal. After Gil moved to Manchester in 2001 to play for Middlewich Town, then Salford and Hyde, he reconnected with Queiroz, who worked at United as the assistant manager.

There have been conversations, Gomes admits. But the goal has always been England, for whom he has played at every youth level from under-16; he captained the under-17s to World Cup glory in 2017. The final step beckons.

Newcastle do not fear any England move for Howe *Page 33* →

Clarke hopes to write new chapter after Euros flop

Ewan Murray

As Scotland kick off their Nations League campaign against Poland on a run of one victory in 12 - against Gibraltar - Steve Clarke finds himself about to start what feels a make-or-break period, primarily in respect of public perception. Promotion to Group A - Portugal and Croatia also lie in wait - epitomised Scotland's upward trajectory in 2022 but now carries grave danger.

It was a nervous, unsure manager who faced the media to preview the visit of Robert Lewandowski and co. The high of beating Spain 2-0 in March last year feels an eternity ago. The inference is that Clarke believes criticism over Scotland's performances in Germany, where they collected one point from three matches, was unduly harsh.

"We felt our country right behind us in the summer and we get that they are disappointed," the captain, Andy Robertson, said. "Now it is up to us to try and drag them along with us again. It is up to us to try and show on the pitch that we are willing to fight, we are willing to win games, we are willing to put in the hard yards. If we do that, then we know our fans will come with us as well, because we know they love supporting Scotland.

"We saw that in the summer. I think the German people loved them and we want that again. We felt the love in the summer, and we were all disappointed by the end, but it is up to us to try and feel the love again."

Scotland's lack of aggression and attacking intent against Hungary in their final Euro 2024 game drew derision. For managers, perception rapidly morphs into reality. Clarke, unfairly, is viewed by some as dour and one-dimensional. It is Clarke who has raised standards to the point where tournament football, once an unattainable dream, has been



▲ *Andy Robertson understands the disappointment felt by Scotland fans*

achieved twice in three attempts. "For me, it's been a long summer and I look forward to the game and see what we get from the players," he said. "I'm sure we will get a good reaction." A glance at his personnel supplies key mitigating factors. Scotland lack depth of talent at anywhere close to the top level. Whether an impatient public care is another matter.

"For these six games across the next three windows, it's probably correct to say that we can use them to try and make sure that when we get to the World Cup qualifying games, we understand where we are," Clarke said. "What we can do as a squad and how successful we can be as a squad. That's what we have to look towards."

'You can show humanity – that is not a weakness'





◀ *Luis de la Fuente lifts the European Championship trophy (left); the Spain coach takes a breather amid Nations League preparations (right)*
PABLO GARCÍA

Triumphant with Spain at youth level and Euro 2024, Luis de la Fuente has a special insight into the mindset of a modern player – and what it takes to forge a winning team



Sid Lowe
Madrid

Luis de la Fuente is sitting in a small white office on the second floor of a quiet corner of the Spanish Football Federation's Las Rozas HQ, running through the qualities sought in superstar managers these days. "Obnoxious, rude, disrespectful, arrogant … it seems like the only way they take you into consideration is this thing they call 'charisma'," he says. "I don't know what that is but if you're those things they say: 'He's got charisma!' Well, then, I don't want charisma. We've shown that being normal can work, too. You don't have to be winding people up all day."

His story is a little different, the tale of a man who was 61 when he took over the Spain team, not so much low profile as almost no profile. A former full-back at Athletic Bilbao and Sevilla, described as quiet, discreet, initially he was a little awkward in public – in conversation, by contrast, he is warm company, charismatic in fact – and he didn't have elite experience. His only senior coaching job had been 11 third-tier games a decade earlier.

What he did have was good players, and he knew that better than anyone. He joined the federation in 2013, integrated into a structure put in place in the late 90s by Iñaki Sáez, and a culture that brought success. "It is a process going back many years, based around an idea, controlled. I've been here [nearly] 12 years, Santi [Denia, the under-21 coach who just won the Olympics] a little longer." The youth coordinators Tito Blanco and Francis Hernández sit working in the office next door.

De la Fuente led Spain to the European title at under-19 and under-21 level, as well as an Olympic silver medal. Like Gareth Southgate and Lionel Scaloni, De la Fuente was promoted from within, a model that works. So were some of his players: five of the European Championship-winning squad this summer won the European under-21s in 2019.

De la Fuente says: "When I was made *seleccionador* I said if I had an advantage it was that I knew the players. That allowed us to 'bet' on the future. The sad thing is after the Euros people valued Dani Olmo. Do they not realise who Dani Olmo was four years ago? Or Fabián? Or [Marc] Cucurella? People didn't know who our players were. That's the drama. Not for us, but for them … what were you watching?"

The European champions, perhaps the best there have been. An exciting, dynamic team that had, in Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, symbols of a new Spain – "that strengthens society, culture, and it's the future," De la Fuente says – and lined up with 10 outfield players from 10 clubs in the final. One that racked up seven wins out of seven, four World Cup winners defeated (Italy, Germany, France, England), no tournament team ever so dominant. And yet theirs was an unexpected success, their participation greeted initially with pessimism, on the outside at least.

"To win every game and against opponents of that magnitude is difficult to imagine, to dream of," De la Fuente says. "But we're very simplistic. That phrase people think was invented recently – game by game – is as old as walking forwards and we went one obstacle at a time. We have to take the drama out of the concepts win and lose; sometimes it's destiny's whim. But our conviction was we were there to win, to reach our limits. When you give yourself entirely, you never fail. Internally, we were convinced. Outside? We couldn't control it, so it doesn't matter."

There was much they could control, an assuredness about the *selección* that was striking; when England scored in the final, Spain calmly reasserted their authority. "And it was like that against everyone apart from half an hour against Germany," De la Fuente says. "Italy was a key game. If we had lost, we would have been working against the tide, but that game was … " He knocks on the table. "'Here we are.' It's hard to win 4-0 but in terms of morale, we felt [as if we had]. That gave as assurance, strengthened us. With confidence, teams with talent – and this one has talent – grow.

"You can't expect to compete against Germany, France and England, and not be taken to the limit. But we always recovered, we were always convinced, knew what we had to do. And it's easier when you have good players.

"There's an idea, a technical and tactical approach. But above all this is a product of their talent. We wanted to be more versatile, because we knew they could be.



▲ *De la Fuente feels Rodri should be in contention for the Ballon d'Or*

To impose would be a mistake, limiting their capacities. And faith in young players isn't an act, it's a conviction. My formation was at clubs with a culture of bringing players through: Athletic and Sevilla. When you see talent, play them, even if they're young."

Young is one thing, *16* another. De la Fuente cracks up. "But Lamine is *very* good," he says. How good? "It's true what I said: that he's touched by God's wand. There are players that are different. I don't want to get into *those* comparisons, because I know we're going to start [that], and they're different footballers, different eras. But the talent? *Pfff* … there's something that sets them apart. The super mega cracks, football geniuses, those who [made] history, all have something. At that young age they all seemed different, older."

But they are not. Lamine Yamal arrived in Germany with his homework, fourth-year exams to sit. De la Fuente laughs at the idea of him trying to help with his maths – "that's all he needs" – but there is a pastoral role. Legal limitations, too. "It is important we do our work as educators and developers; there's no escaping the fact that he was 16, a kid. There are questions of privacy, protection. When the players went out to eat, he couldn't because he was underage. Someone with responsibility would stay at the hotel, looking after him. There are parental authorisations but, more so, a responsibility to society. The federation's institutional responsibility goes beyond rights, legal requirements, authorisation, parental consents. So there *are* some inconveniences to being young – though we would all love to take a few years off."

That human dimension, guidance, is vital, De la Fuente says; it is also something shared, three discernible and different leaders emerging within the squad. There is Dani Carvajal, a competitive leader; Rodri, a footballing leader; and Álvaro Morata, an almost gentle captain, no classic leader. His ascendancy comes from a place of empathy, kindness, an apparent vulnerability even, and De la Fuente's loyalty towards him has been fierce. Morata admitted he had only made the European Championship after talking to Andrés Iniesta and Bojan Krkic, former internationals who had mental health issues, and Morata's willingness to externalise his emotional and psychological difficulties gives strength to others.

"He can appear fragile because of the things he's said but he's a tough man," De la Fuente says. "He is strong because he's had to overcome things others would not have been able to. There's a contradiction in talking about his 'fragility' because you need energy and strength to face that. Someone who is capable of overcoming extreme situations – one day maybe he'll explain what he's been through – shows great strength.

"I was aware of what he was going through and that united us: we're very close. It goes beyond coach-player; you feel empathy for someone fighting things that are *very* difficult. Footballers have moments when they need support. And [his approach] allows others in the group to take strength as well. We need to normalise, humanise sportspeople. It's like that charisma thing: that to be 'charismatic' you have to be *altivo*, proud, arrogant. No. You can show humanity. That's not a weakness."

As for Rodri, he's a coach? "Yes," De la Fuente says, smiling. "That position is always key. With Rodri and [Martín] Zubimendi, I have the two best central midfielders in the world. Rodri's a computer."

And a Ballon d'Or winner? "Both Rodri and Dani Carvajal have without doubt earned the right. If after everything they have done they're not considered, it would be a huge injustice. Look at Dani: six Champions Leagues?! Rodri has a Champions League, more to come, and I don't know how many leagues. They're European champions. Do they deserve to win it? Of course. I'm championing them. They've won it all."

And they're not stopping now, De la Fuente says. Today, the European champions begin their defence of the Nations League against Serbia in Belgrade when surely they should still be on a beach in Ibiza, medals round their necks. "This generation of players are insatiable. We want to keep breaking records, take another step, another game more, another game more …

"We won a Nations League. We won a Euros. Now we're going for another Nations League. Then we will try the World Cup. Some genius said the Nations League is a minor trophy but it's the best 16 teams in Europe. To qualify it's harder than the Euros. But we will go to win, like we always do."



Draper overwhelms De Minaur to reach first major semi-final

Tumaini Carayol
Flushing Meadows

When he should have already been building the foundations of his promising tennis future, Jack Draper spent long periods during the formative years of his professional career watching from the sidelines. He simply could not stay fit. His countless injury struggles meant that, while his talent has always been undeniable, for so long it was unclear if and when his body would allow it to flourish.

Finally, Draper has arrived at the highest levels of the sport. The 22-year-old continued his supreme breakout run in New York by outplaying an ailing Alex de Minaur, the world No 10, maintaining his focus and his composure under pressure to reach his first grand slam semi-final at the US Open with a 6-3, 7-5, 6-2 win on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Five matches into his New York odyssey, Draper, the 25th seed, has still not dropped a set and has conceded just 36 games, the fifth fewest dropped en route to the US Open semi-finals over the last 40 years. In the first grand slam tournament since Andy Murray's retirement at the Olympics, Draper has become the first British man to reach the semi-finals of the US Open since Murray, his friend and idol, won his maiden grand slam title here in 2012.

Draper will now break into the world's top 20 for the first time in his career, an achievement only attained by nine British men in the history of the ATP tour. He will face either his good friend Jannik Sinner, the top seed, or the 2021 champion and fifth seed Daniil Medvedev.

"This is not like an overnight thing for me," said Draper. "I've believed for a long time that I've been putting in the work and doing the right things, and I knew that my time would come. I didn't know when it would be, but hopefully from here I can do a lot of amazing things. I'm very proud of myself."

Standing between Draper and his first major semi-final was one of the best defensive players in the world. De Minaur's ability to lengthen points and turn his matches into painful physical battles has made this an extremely tough matchup for Draper, who had lost all three of their past meetings. Having only faced superior top-five opponents in his three prior quarter-finals, this was also the biggest match of the 25-year-old's career.

As De Minaur looked accordingly tense at the beginning, Draper was determined to dictate on his terms, pushing the Australian behind the baseline with his heavy topspin forehand, with which he can sometimes be too tentative, and then searching for opportunities to dictate with it. After striking his forehand with authority throughout the set, Draper just about dragged himself over the line despite nerves and a low first-serve percentage.


Alex de Minaur briefly rallied in the second set but could not overcome Draper

Having secured the opening set, Draper further relaxed and dominated the baseline, breaking serve for a 2-1 lead. But it gradually became clear that De Minaur was in physical pain. Before the US Open, the Australian had not competed since Wimbledon, where he had injured his hip and withdrawn before a quarter-final against Novak Djokovic. Despite looking in good shape during the tournament, he was clearly wincing after strenuous points from early in the second set onwards. "I wish I felt better. Let's just put it that way," he said afterwards. "It's tough. It's a big opportunity. It's a big chance."

Across the net, Draper had his own physical issues. After stretching his leg between points early in set two, he took a medical timeout at 2-1 and had his right thigh wrapped by the trainer. Although he occasionally seemed to be walking tentatively, Draper's movement was not significantly



◀ British No 1 Jack Draper plays a forehand shot during his straight-sets victory to reach the last four
JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

affected. "At the end of the day it didn't get any worse, and I felt good towards the end," said Draper.

With his confidence high and De Minaur struggling but fighting on, this became a significant mental challenge for Draper. He needed to maintain his focus, take his opportunities and not allow De Minaur to find a foothold in the match.

After failing to secure a double break in set two, despite generating five break points, the momentum very nearly shifted as a nervous Draper lost three consecutive games from 4-2 and served to stay in the second set at 4-5. He responded brilliantly, producing some of his best serving of the day to hold before rolling through two more games. After taking a two-set lead, he refused to let up and he played with clear-minded, relentless aggression until the contest was over and he suddenly stood just two matches away from winning a grand slam title.

"I kept on believing in myself, kept on working," said Draper. "[Injuries] are hard moments. This is not a hard moment compared to that. This is a privilege, and this is an honour to be in this position. This is why I work so hard, so I've got to just keep it going in my stride."

Analysis
Gerard Meagher

Borthwick now has great power but responsibility will weigh heavy

In the Lock No 5 bar – a room in Twickenham's east stand dedicated to second-rows – Steve Borthwick was conspicuous by his absence. English rugby's power brokers had gathered to unveil the vaunted new agreement which will shape the landscape of the game but the national team head coach was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he was busy trying to fill the gaps in his backroom staff.

The Professional Game Partnership (PGP) governs how club and country coexist, how the Rugby Football Union and Premiership Rugby cooperate. There was talk of "landmark agreements" and "historic collaboration", but pick through the bones and it is clear that whether it succeeds or fails rests on Borthwick's shoulders.

Because, for all the bells and whistles of the PGP, for all that there has been much diligent work to admire on academy structures, pathway systems and a joint marketing agreement, the crux of these agreements will always be player access. How much of it the England head coach can get and how much the RFU has to reimburse clubs as a result.

The new deal dictates that Borthwick will pick a group of 50 players in an elite squad and he has licence to award up to 25 of them enhanced contracts. Crucially, Borthwick has more control over those on enhanced contracts and the most significant line in the PGP announcement states that he will have "the final say on all sports science and medical matters". It is the one bit of the agreement that made you double-take. A declaration of something more than was expected.

Whether it means Borthwick can dictate when players appear for their clubs – or when they do not – is open to interpretation. Premiership coaches have expressed concern that while it does not explicitly, it effectively will, and the wording appears to go further than suggested recently by the Northampton director of rugby, Phil Dowson. In theory, any decision Borthwick makes that a player should be stood down can be attributed to sports science.

The RFU and Premiership argue that with each player having their own individual development plan the instances where conflict arises will be few, and as part of the agreement there will be an independent chair of the beefed up Professional Rugby Board to arbitrate. They will decide whether Borthwick is making a "reasonable" decision and there will be "checks and challenges", according to the RFU's Conor O'Shea.

"We have to enter this in really good faith," the Premiership Rugby director, Phil Winstanley, said. "This is a conversation we have had multiple times with the directors of rugby. Steve has been speaking to the directors of rugby. The simple answer is Steve has the final say."

The whole situation is nebulous, however. The RFU is paying the clubs £33m a year as part of the new deal, a sizeable uplift, and it will expect something significant in return. Borthwick was furious when Ollie Lawrence turned up before the Six Nations with an injury that Bath knew he had, but he did not, and he is determined to avoid a repeat.

It is the weeks before international windows that are likely to provoke most conflict; when a player needs an injection, or a breather, and England want him to take it before turning up to camp. Equally, it should not be forgotten that Sale warned England that taking Tom Curry on the summer tour of Japan and New Zealand would shorten his career and Borthwick picked him anyway, so we take with a pinch a salt the insistence that decisions will be made with the player at heart. "Ultimately someone has to have the final say," O'Shea said.

It falls to Borthwick, but there remains much to iron out before the season starts because how many players he has control over is also unclear. O'Shea was insistent that Borthwick will not award all 25 contracts before the autumn on the basis that he wants their rarity to enhance their value in the players' eyes.

There have, however, been concerns the RFU cannot afford all 25 and negotiations with Team England Rugby – the organisation that now represents players in contract talks with the union – have not been finalised. Hurdles are still to be overcome, not least over player welfare, because the players are determined to avoid a scenario such as last season when Maro Itoje went over the game limit of 30 appearances.

Borthwick has done his best to assuage doubts that the clubs have, including the fact that he does not have any strength and conditioning coaches after the departures of Aled Walters and Felix Jones. He has been to see six clubs in pre-season and each coach seems far happier once he has been to visit. It is often said that the success of this deal will be determined by relationships and it is true that Borthwick has done much to rebuild bridges burned by Eddie Jones.

"We have to have better relationships between the England head coach and the directors of rugby," Winstanley said. "Steve's put so much effort into this over the last few months and that's started to play out in the success of this process."

So much rests, then, on how Borthwick manages those relationships, while exerting the control he wants. Tucked away in the corner of the Lock No 5 bar there is a plaque dedicated to Borthwick with the words "pillar of strength" across it. Certainly it is he who wields the power.



◀ Sale warned England about selecting Tom Curry for the summer tour to New Zealand
JOE ALLISON/RFU/GETTY IMAGES

'There was no indication this would happen'

➔ **Continued** *from back page*

buy into this new structure, and are committed to working for England.

"We are deeply disappointed that this has taken place with no indication that this was going to happen. I think the fact that a number of players have publicly said that they have had their own internal meetings and said they couldn't see this coming and the environment is fine. It is very disappointing. I feel for Steve. Steve has made some choices and has brought some people in and I feel for him."

Unlike Walters, Jones does not appear to have a job lined up and, though Sweeney would not speculate on the reasons behind his departure, he confirmed the Irishman has a 12-month notice period. It is unclear whether he will see it out in its entirety, but replacing Walters is the No 1 priority for Borthwick with Sweeney insisting England can still secure world-class coaches despite the recent turmoil.

"We can absolutely attract the best possible talent to come into the England setup," he said.

Meanwhile Kevin Sinfield, who served as defence coach up until the World Cup last year before continuing as skills coach, is close to agreeing to new deal. It was said he had planned to stand down after the tournament in France but is now expected to remain on a consultancy basis. "I expect him to be through with us to the next World Cup," the RFU director of performance, Conor O'Shea said.

Tall story
England's 6ft 7in seamer Hull to make Test debut at the Oval

Page 32 →



Reign in Spain
De la Fuente on Euros glory – and the genius of Lamine

Interview *Page 35* →





ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS

Draper eases into US Open semi-final
New star of British tennis emulates mentor Murray

Tumaini Carayol's report
Page 36 →

Leicester may face points deduction in new PSR case

Exclusive
Matt Hughes

Leicester could face another points deduction battle this season, with the club required to submit their 2023-24 accounts to the Premier League by the end of December to establish whether they have breached profitability and sustainability rules.

The league will apply a rule introduced last summer to investigate Leicester's finances at the earliest opportunity, after expressing "disappointment" at the judgment on Tuesday from an independent commission regarding the club's three-year losses ending with the 2022-23 campaign. The three-person appeal panel ruled the Premier League had no jurisdiction to charge Leicester for overspending during the season they were relegated because the club were in the EFL when the annual accounting period ended on 30 June.

Leicester had been charged with a £24.4m breach of PSR limits, which based on the punishments given to Everton and Nottingham Forest last season would have resulted in the club being docked up to seven points if found guilty. The Everton and Forest sanctions were based on a tariff of a three-point deduction for breaking the rules, and one more point for each £6.5m they were above the limit, before any deductions for cooperating or pleading guilty.

The Premier League is unlikely to appeal against the commission's verdict but is preparing to take action against Leicester for possible overspending during the 2021-24 period, because based on the judgment on Tuesday they were a top-flight club at the end of their most recent accounting period on 30 June 2024.

Under PSR rules introduced last summer the Premier League insists that clubs who made losses in the first two years of the three-year accounting period submit their accounts by 31 December so that any disciplinary action and points deductions can be imposed by the end of the season.

Leicester sources have expressed confidence they will not be in breach despite their three-year losses to June 2023 being £129.4m, but the league remains to be convinced. The club's accounts showed pre-tax losses of £92.5m and £90m in 2022 and 2023 respectively before the Premier League's deductions for infrastructure spending.

'Steve has our 100% support'
RFU concerned by exits but deny 'unstable environment'

Gerard Meagher

The Rugby Football Union has given its 100% backing to Steve Borthwick after the sudden resignations of Felix Jones and Aled Walters with the chief executive, Bill Sweeney, refuting suggestions of an "unstable working environment".

Confirming publicly Jones's decision to quit after just eight months, Sweeney admitted he was blindsided by the defence coach's resignation as well as Walters's departure to Ireland and, evidently happy to make his views clear, described the double blow as "deeply disappointing".



Steve Borthwick's top priority is replacing Aled Walters

Both resignations will be felt keenly, Walters is a popular figure with the players and Jones introduced a blitz defence that has already reaped rewards. The latter was said to have reservations over the environment Borthwick had cultivated at England, but Sweeney was adamant that the head coach has the players' full backing and insisted the current upheaval was markedly different to the regular turnover of assistants under Eddie Jones.

"I don't think it is an unstable environment," Sweeney said. "It's not correct to compare this situation with the previous regime. I don't believe the circumstances are the same. It's a completely different situation. It's a valid question, and of course we should be concerned, are concerned and get involved in it, but it's not right to compare the two situations.

"It [Jones's resignation] came out of the blue. It was totally unexpected. What I can say, though, is that Steve has absolute 100% support from us – from me personally and of the RFU. I can also say categorically he has the full support, 100%, of the squad.

"If you talk to the players, they were quite keen to deliver a message that they've got a really enjoyable camp. They seem to genuinely enjoy being in camp and they want to ensure we've got coaches coming in who are passionate about our journey, will

37 →



THE BEACHCOMBER RESORTS & HOTELS COLLECTION ROYAL PALM • DINAROBIN • PARADIS • TROU AUX BICHES • SHANDRANI • VICTORIA • CANONNIER • MAURICIA

BR01818 01/2024

DOWN

1 A legally recognised union of two people in a romantic relationship (1 word)

2 The feeling of having a duty to someone or something (1 word)

3 Looking to the future (2 words)

4 A policy that pays out a sum of money to help look after your family if you pass away (2 words)

5 When something is done it's ______ (1 word)

6 The feeling of being safe (1 word)

ACROSS

7 A type of insurance that supports you if you can't work due to sickness or injury (2 words)

8 An application for a payout from an insurer (1 word)

9 The person that receives an insurance policy payout (1 word)

10 The property and money you will leave behind for your loved ones (1 word)

11 A legal document that sets out how you would like your estate to be distributed (1 word)

12 The absence of stress or anxiety (3 words)

Helping solve your insurance puzzles?

It takes Aviva.

aviva.co.uk

AVIVA

Trump's sexist attacks make it clear that he's rattled *Sidney Blumenthal, page 3*
Do believe the hype around Labour – not the toxic press *Polly Toynbee, page 4*
James Lovelock and the secret history of Gaia theory *The long read, page 5*
G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Thursday 5 September 2024

Journal

Opinion and ideas



A memorial near Grenfell Tower, yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS

The greed and neglect are laid bare: now is the time for justice

Peter Apps



'A task that only the government can undertake." A short, seemingly unremarkable sentence, tucked away on the 225th page of the second volume of Martin Moore-Bick's 1,700-page Grenfell Tower inquiry report. But this thought on regulation encapsulates the broken political philosophy the preceding pages so graphically outline: a state that stepped back and allowed a ruthless, dishonest industry to regulate itself.

At its heart, Grenfell is a story about human suffering. It is about the 72 victims – 18 of them children – lost in a tower-block fire that could so easily have been avoided. It is about their lost futures, the family members left behind and all the grief and pain and suffering that the years of delay in delivering justice and change have piled on to them. But yesterday's report is also a story about politics, economics and power. It is about the sort of society we have built for ourselves in 21st-century Britain.

The report opens by tracking the actions of the British government, from the aftermath of a cladding fire at a building in Knowsley, Merseyside, in 1991 through to the days immediately preceding the Grenfell fire. Here we witness a state operation fail again and again to amend its official guidance to restrict the use of highly dangerous combustible cladding products.

And this happened despite multiple fires, increasingly urgent warnings of a looming catastrophe and even tests – paid for with public money – that confirmed there was a major, life-safety risk from commonly used cladding materials.

But at every stage, government advisers and officials – those who should have been acting in the interests of the citizens they represented – hummed and hawed and did nothing. For years, the bereaved and survivors have thrown a two-word accusation at those they see as responsible: you knew. This report confirms that. It sets out how at points, officials appeared to cover up the extent of the problem. A report in 1999 was edited to remove references to flaws in official guidance. A devastating test failure on the cladding later used on Grenfell in 2001 was "shelved" and "forgotten". The official investigation into the 2009 Lakanal House fire, in Camberwell, south London, which killed six people, was halted after less than a month with many key questions left unanswered.

Why? That's a key question for survivors and campaigners. The report seems to brand the officials responsible as worn-out and incompetent rather than actively corrupt. They are described as "complacent and shortsighted", their actions as "surprising" or "difficult to understand". But the sense of a creaking operation left to rot in a dusty corner of a neglected government department comes through.

By the mid-2010s, the building control division within the government department now called the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had seen its team cut from 14 staff to six and given no budget to hire additional support. They were "demoralised and demotivated", management by more senior officials was "sporadic" or "nonexistent" and the department had neither the "ability nor capacity to issue practical guidance to industry because its systems … had become obsolete".

But culpability goes higher. Look to ministers who no longer saw regulating industry as a priority. Ministers, in fact, who were intensely pushing the opposite agenda: they wanted economic growth and they wanted the state to get out of the way of industry's capacity to deliver it. Regulation was red tape and needed to be removed, not imposed.

Eric Pickles, secretary of state during the key period in the early 2010s, angrily insisted when questioned back in 2022 that building regulations relating to fire safety were exempt from this push – and that he would never have allowed a deregulatory agenda to compromise life safety.

But the report says Pickles's evidence was "flatly contradicted by that of his officials and the contemporaneous documents", which made it abundantly clear that the government believed the construction sector should be left out of the bothersome reach of meddling bureaucrats.

Trapped in this climate, officials did not recommend tougher regulations, even when they knew them to be necessary, because they realised it was not what ministers wanted to hear. This abdication of responsibility by the state is ghoulishly encapsulated by the government paying scientists at a private laboratory to monitor the risk from real world fires, but barring them from making policy recommendations that would have resulted in tougher regulation, a state of affairs the inquiry said "epitomised what had gone wrong".

In what should probably be read as a repudiation of one of the central economic tenets of David Cameron's government, the report concluded that it "was not in the public interest to allow policy on deregulation to impede the ability of officials to promote changes … that would improve public safety", calling this "a serious failure of leadership".

That was government. It should have protected the public. It didn't. Instead, it offered the industry regulatory freedom. After recounting these failures in central government, the report examines what corporations did with that freedom. Here, its language

*

Peter Apps *is the author of Show Me the Bodies: How We Let Grenfell Happen and a contributing editor at Inside Housing*

The greed and neglect are laid bare: now is the time for justice

Peter Apps

← Continued from front

hardens further. It is clear, grieving families will learn, that "systematic dishonesty" by manufacturers was a "very significant reason" why the products ended up on Grenfell Tower.

Arconic, which made the violently combustible polyethylene-cored cladding panels, was found to have "deliberately concealed from the market the true extent" of the danger of using its panels on high rises, and instead "sought to exploit what it perceived to be a weak regulatory regime in the UK" to make sales.

Then there are the insulation manufacturers. While the report may not have found the products made by these two firms contributed significantly to the spread of the blaze, their behaviour has still been savagely criticised.

Celotex, which made most of the combustible insulation that sat behind the cladding panels, "embarked on a dishonest scheme to mislead its customers and the wider market", while Kingspan, the market leader, which provided a small amount of material for Grenfell, was said to have indulged in "deeply entrenched and persistent dishonesty … in pursuit of commercial gain".

This was the market at its ugliest. These companies were all supported by private (or privatised) companies that had effectively taken on the regulatory roles the state no longer wanted: certifying products as safe, testing materials against the official criteria and even writing the guidance documents that set the rules on what could and couldn't be used.

These firms came in for severe criticism in the report. The British Board of Agrément (BBA), an organisation that provides certificates apparently confirming the performance of construction products, was said to have displayed "incompetence" and an "ingrained willingness to accommodate customers instead of insisting on high standards".

The Building Research Establishment (BRE), our former national research facility, which was privatised in 1997, was "marred by unprofessional conduct, inadequate practices [and] a lack of effective oversight" and had "sacrificed rigorous application of principle to its commercial interests".

These bodies and others failed to do the job of regulating the industry – one the government had abdicated from. The scandal of Grenfell encompasses the betrayal by those who committed bad acts and those who did nothing to stop them.

So we come back to the conclusion quoted at the start of this piece. The housing and construction sector is huge, it is powerful: regulating the industry is a task only the government can undertake.

There are many other things grieving families will read in this report that confirm the allegations they have made since the day of the fire: of the "toxic" and "bullying" culture at the social housing provider in west London; the "cavalier attitude" to safety of the construction firms involved in the refurbishment; the catastrophic failure of the state to provide a humanitarian response in the aftermath; and the abdication of responsibility by the London fire brigade, which had failed to prepare for a foreseeable disaster in the years before the fire.

But I believe the dark heart of this catastrophe lies in this simple, depressing narrative: the state stepped back, corporate greed stepped in and innocent people died.

Now this story of inquiry must turn to justice. Moore-Bick's report sets out in forensic detail the failures of the corporations and individuals who allowed this disaster to happen. The evidence is all there, in the thousands of footnotes and publicly available documents it cites.

The state may have stepped back from regulation, but it still provides a criminal justice system. That must now do its job. Grenfell was an utterly avoidable disaster. Those who brought it to pass must be held to full account.

The Guardian
Founded 1821 Independently owned by the Scott Trust № 55,380
'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Grenfell inquiry report

A devastating verdict on government and industry. Now for accountability

Seven years after the unimaginable horror of the Grenfell Tower fire, those who survived and the bereaved at last have an authoritative verdict on who is to blame. This is a staging post, not the end of their courageous struggle for justice. We hope it brings some relief that the public inquiry chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick has vindicated their long-expressed view that decades of regulatory failure, combined with the "systematic dishonesty" of construction companies, were responsible for the tragedy that ended the lives of 72 people and broke the hearts of many more.

Arconic, which made the combustible cladding panels that were the main cause of the fire's spread, and Kingspan and Celotex, which supplied insulation, are singled out as having pursued dishonest strategies in marketing dangerous products. The building control department of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is found to have shown "indifference to fire safety", while Conservative councillors were mainly interested in the building's looks. These are staggeringly awful findings, whose impact must not be blunted by the fact that they are familiar from earlier hearings.

But culpability extends much wider. One of the most striking things about Grenfell is the sheer number of private and public bodies that bear a share of responsibility for what happened. The architects Studio E, the builders Rydon and Harley Facades, the fire consultant Exova and the misleadingly named tenant management organisation (which was really an arm's-length body of the council) are all blamed for grave failures, and for being part of the "merry-go-round of buck-passing" described by the inquiry's lead counsel.

The London fire brigade's failure to prepare for a cladding fire – even after a similar one at Lakanal House in 2009, in which six people died – was criticised in the inquiry's phase 1 report. Testing, quality assurance and fire safety bodies, and ministers and civil servants, all contributed to a situation in which a wealthy council in one of London's richest areas was able to turn a worn-out but functional concrete block into a death trap. The Department for Communities, under Eric Pickles and permanent secretary Melanie Dawes (now the chief executive of Ofcom), was "poorly run". Even worse, Lord Pickles' deregulation drive was a "serious flaw" and meant matters affecting fire safety and risk to life "were ignored, delayed or disregarded" in the years before the fire. Those who emerge from the inquiry "with the greatest credit", the report says, are members of the local community.

What happens now? Sir Keir Starmer apologised in the Commons, and said letters would be sent as a first step towards blocking the companies responsible from public contracts. Police and prosecutors have been waiting for the inquiry's conclusions before considering charges for crimes that could include corporate manslaughter and misconduct in public office. Trials are not expected before 2027 – a decade after the disaster. But holding giant commercial entities to account in the criminal courts is never easy. Key witnesses from Arconic refused to appear at the inquiry.

Given these delays and uncertainty, it would be wrong to think that accountability is solely a matter for the criminal law. The government itself must ensure that consequences flow from the inquiry's findings. Businesses that have been shown to be dishonest, and cavalier about safety, should be blocked from further public contracts, and from sponsoring MPs (as Saint-Gobain, the maker of Celotex, has been revealed to). It is questionable whether a company such as Arconic, which refused to cooperate fully with the inquiry, should be allowed to operate in the UK at all. Ministers should accept the inquiry's recommendations for much tougher regulation of construction, a new college of fire and rescue, and compulsory evacuation plans for disabled residents in social housing. Renewed efforts must be made to remediate other blocks with plastic cladding, and compel builders and landlords to take responsibility.

Nothing can make it less distressing to remember the dreadful circumstances in which the victims died. Nothing can excuse inaction against those responsible, now that the inquiry is over.

Conservative leadership

All of the candidates have yet to address the reasons for their party's downfall

And then there were five. The contest to replace Rishi Sunak as leader of the Conservative party has tightened with the elimination of Priti Patel in a ballot of Tory MPs. Robert Jenrick led the pack. The same process will whittle the field down to four next week.

While the race is getting more intense, it shows no sign of engaging the public. Selecting opposition leaders is a niche interest outside Westminster, especially when a former ruling party is reeling from election defeat. Reduced to a rump of 121 MPs, the parliamentary Conservative party is far from power and drained of relevance to the country that recently chose an alternative government.

That is the challenge that the remaining candidates should be confronting. Instead they appear to be operating under the illusion that, as in the past four Tory leadership selections, the winner automatically becomes prime minister. It is normal for prospective leaders to set out policy priorities and boast of achievements (real and imagined), but without candour about the scale and causes of July's rout the whole exercise looks more like collaborative denial than healthy competition.

When prospective Tory leaders pledge to revive the Rwanda scheme for deporting asylum seekers or declare themselves prepared to pull Britain out of the European convention on human rights, they are advertising their unreadiness to begin the necessary process of political renewal and brand rehabilitation. Even more eloquent on that deficiency is the collective silence on public services, how they came to be in a parlous condition after 14 years of Tory rule and why voters are right to be angry about it.

Naturally, candidates in an election will discuss the topics of most interest to the electorate, and in this case that means appealing to fellow Tory MPs and party members. But there is a familiar trap here for parties newly cast into opposition. Heavy defeat reduces support down to a core that is, by definition, unrepresentative of mainstream opinion. This shrivelled base feels misunderstood by the rest of the country and seeks reassurance from a prospective leader. But satisfying that appetite, leaning into the ideological comfort zone, sends a rebarbative signal to non-aligned voters, making it harder to rebuild wider support.

Time is the traditional remedy. When popularity proves elusive, party stalwarts learn that their pet projects and policy obsessions are not necessarily shared by the rest of the country. The process can be accelerated with astute leadership, but it begins with acknowledgment of the scale of the task. It's hard to see any of the remaining candidates being able to rise to that challenge, and their party's prospects of swift electoral recovery are shrinking as a result.

Trump's sexist attacks make one thing clear: he's rattled

Sidney Blumenthal



'Kamala, you're fired!" shouted Donald Trump. Then he added: "You're fired. Get out. Get out. Get out, Kamala!" The crowd cheered at his rally on 23 August in Glendale, Arizona. But the invocation of the magic words he recited at the climax of every episode of The Apprentice failed to make her phantom disappear.

Trump views the vice-president's presence as an injustice. He had beaten Joe Biden. His withdrawal and her emergence were the implementation of the far-right replacement theory. The entire scenario has left Trump on the stage in a play for which his only new lines are that he is … sort of for abortion before he is against it, as he always was.

Trump believes in the marrow of his bones that his intuition, his sixth sense, is his secret power. Acting out has been his winning ticket. He is certain that is why his moment came and why it must come again. He gives no credence to circumstances or any other person, which would diminish him. He has achieved godlike status by being true to himself. It's not just that he's incapable of being other than himself, but that he feels it is the only way he's won.

Now against a candidate of change (a woman), his resistance to change (attacking the woman) is his only way to cling to his authenticity. Above all, he fears self-neutralisation. If he cannot act out, he's a nullity to himself, his most terrifying prospect. Anything that could be construed as criticism threatens his manhood, his mental equilibrium and evokes a reflexively hostile response. It is an impossible task to pry him away from his impulses, especially when it's a survival instinct.

Harris is an exponentially greater threat to Trump than E Jean Carroll. The Carroll defamation judgment didn't strip him of his manhood, but could be interpreted as an affirmation: the adjudicated rapist as alpha dog. Losing to Harris would be the extinction of his virility. If he loses, he will not be able to use presidential powers to be a criminal on the loose. The federal cases against him will proceed, even if the US supreme court has eviscerated the constitution in granting him "absolute" official immunity for attempting to overthrow the government.

A defeated Trump will face years of trials, undoubtedly receive guilty verdicts and likely jail time. He will be a depleted convict. His fear of his fate accelerates his impulses to lie, smear and violate all norms to an uncontrollably frantic level.

Harris has become the personification of "nasty" women to Trump. She encompasses the women beyond his decayed appeal who do not aspire to be his ornaments and are therefore his tormentors. He naturally wants to reduce all women to vulnerable and undefended figures he can subjugate at will in a Bergdorf Goodman dressing room, or leap on by surprise in a Bel Air hotel suite. His explanation of his charm in the Access Hollywood tape was that as a star he was irresistible to women who allowed him to "grab 'em by the pussy". But the Carroll and Stormy Daniels cases have exposed his methods, punished and humiliated him. As Daniels testified in the trial for which he was convicted of 34 felonies: "Was it brief?" "Yes." For Trump, that was a worse judgment than the convictions for business fraud.

✻ **Sidney Blumenthal** *is a former senior adviser to Bill and Hillary Clinton and a Guardian US columnist*

> **Time and again, Trump states that Harris is 'not smart', which only reveals his insecurity about facing her in a debate**

Trump's need to assault Harris is even more intense than it was toward Hillary Clinton. In 2016, Trump hadn't been president before. He launched his bid as a branding exercise that went haywire. Now, he's desperate to claw back his lost status, not least to gain the pardon power to remove the extensive federal charges against him. His restoration, which he thought was a snap until 21 July, when Biden withdrew, has been interrupted by a dangerous woman he can't subdue and an allure he can't fathom.

Trump has a preternatural sense it's slipping away. The gift of the demagogue is to grasp the currents of the masses, which he can exploit for his self-aggrandisement. His compulsion to attack Harris increases every day his invective falls flat. He began with a twisted pronunciation of her name, then called her "Kamabla" and moved to "Comrade Kamala". Baffled by her self-assurance, he did not rely on his usual stable of insults hurled at women: "horseface", "crazed, crying lowlife", "dog".

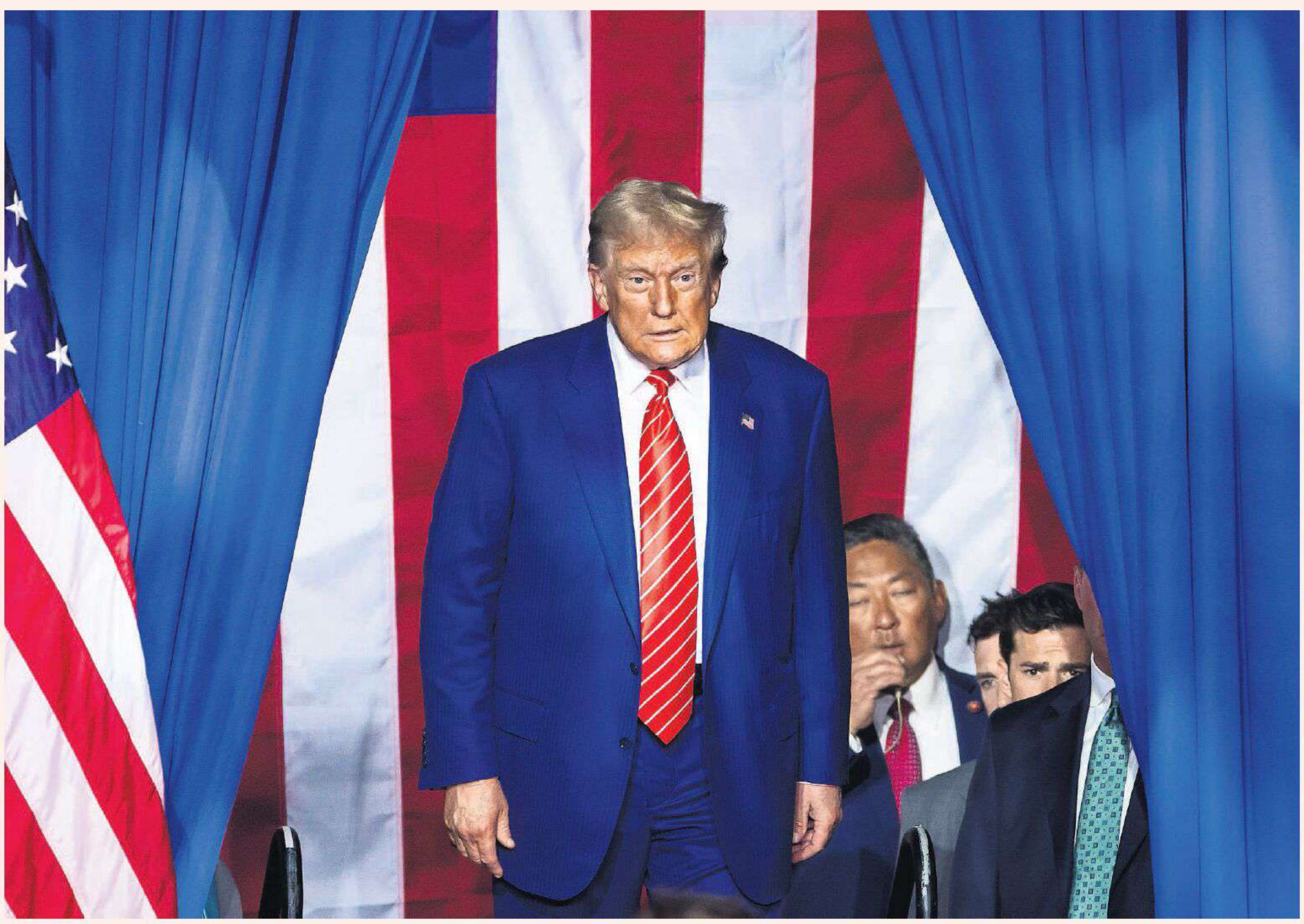
Trump started to circulate debasing sexual innuendo about Harris on 18 August with a retweet of a video consisting of a warped version of Alanis Morissette's song Ironic to suggest that Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee through oral sex.

The video depicts Harris holding a sign reading, "I am a moron." Then the face of Willie Brown, the former speaker of the California assembly, whom she once dated, pops up behind a sofa on which she is sitting with her husband, Doug Emhoff. Trump continued his obsessive theme on 29 August, retweeting a picture of Harris and Hillary Clinton with the caption: "Funny how blowjobs impacted both their careers differently."

Trump's quandary is that in trying to demean Harris, his old techniques have lost their fascination. Now he perceives himself as the nervous contestant in a beauty pageant. "But I say that I am much better-looking. I'm a better-looking person than Kamala … They said, 'No, her biggest advantage is that she's a beautiful woman.' I'm going, huh? I never thought of that. I'm better-looking than she is."

Time and again, Trump repeats that Harris is "not smart" and "not very smart", which only reveals his insecurity about facing her in a debate he has variously refused and accepted. His campaign's insistence that his microphone be shut off only underscores his advisers' dread of his unmonitored mouth. After her CNN interview, he accused her both of being "boring" - that is, he couldn't figure out a point of criticism - and of "rambling incoherence", his obvious projection.

"I think I am entitled to personal attacks," he says. "I do not have a lot of respect for her. I don't have a lot of respect for her intelligence, and I think she'll be a terrible president … And whether the personal attacks are good, bad - I mean, she certainly attacks me personally. She actually called me weird. 'He's weird.' She's not smart. I don't believe she loves our country. Some people say, 'Oh, why don't you be nice?' But they're not nice to me. They want to put me in prison. They don't want me to be a little bit nasty. They want to put me in prison. Me!"



Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, last week PHOTOGRAPH: JIM LO SCALZO/EPA



Do believe the hype – but not the toxic press

Polly Toynbee



The honeymoon for Labour is over, say the massed ranks of the rightwing media. What honeymoon was that? It seems to have been over since 5 July. Despite their own readers voting for that Labour victory in large numbers, the majority of media outlets paused not a moment to reconsider whether their rantings were out of kilter with the country.

Before the election, pollsters Redfield and Wilton found, no surprise, huge Labour leads among Guardian, Observer and Mirror readers, but also large proportions backing Labour among readers of the Daily Express (41% to the Tories' 27%), the Daily Mail (37% to 24%), the Telegraph (34% to 21%) and the Times (42% to 23%), with the Sun, FT and Economist much the same. Yet their commentators seem quite unabashed. Telegraph columnists have been apocalyptic: "It's over for Britain, crushed by Labour's cruel war on the middle classes".

As in those tales of English tourists talking to foreigners, they just shout louder. This media cadre deceives the Tory party in its leadership election. Net-zero antagonists ignore the 77% of voters who worry about climate change. Hysteria about a "war on the middle class" ignores recent polling showing that 40% support more spending on public services, even if it means that they personally pay more tax; only 27% want tax cuts.

Old-timers who were around in 1997 recall Tony Blair's long period of grace in his first year. Since then the savagery of social media has infected politics, so erstwhile serious Tory media outlets seem minimally interested in the facts of any issue. Deny it as they might, broadcasters often follow those agendas from the Mail front pages. How did that nonsense about moving a portrait of Margaret Thatcher (commissioned, incidentally, by Gordon Brown) make it screaming on to front pages day after day, and even into the BBC news?

That's the cynicism Keir Starmer pledged to reverse: can it be done amid such hostility? People want hope, say those doing all they can to demolish it, criticising Starmer's unrosy rose garden speech for joylessness. But Boris Johnson-style boosterism would have been absurd with grim deficiencies in every austerity-struck department. The only hope comes from loudly underpromising, and eventually overdelivering.

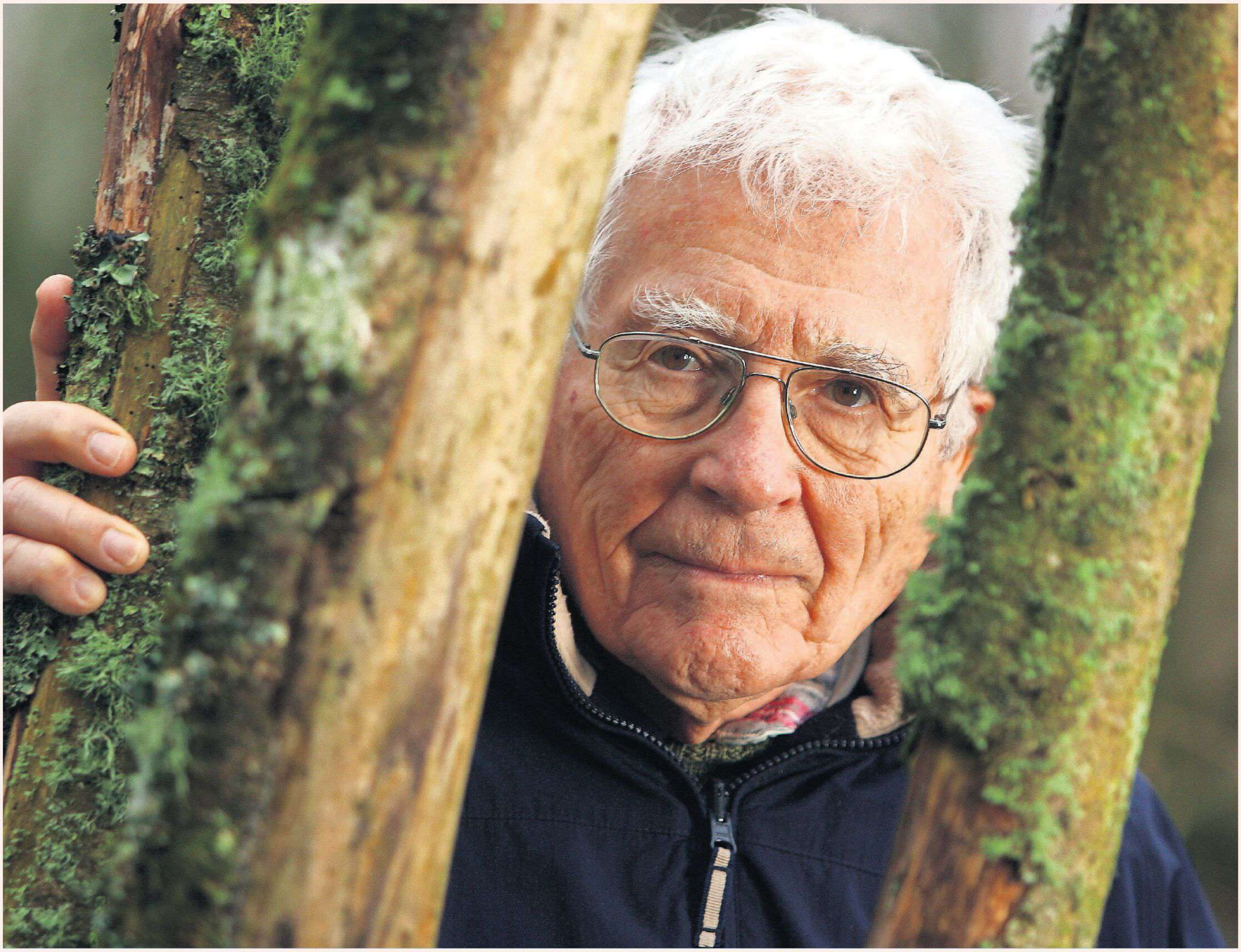
Relentless onslaughts cause slippage in the polls, and Labour support was always fragile with a win on a very low turnout. These are not happy times. Labour insiders are braced for things not getting better for a while. Keeping up their spirits, they recall that even with her press claque, Thatcher was phenomenally unpopular in her first years – and six times more voters still expect Labour to win the next election than to lose.

Labour does notably lack enough wholehearted backers for policies that deserve more cheerleaders: on green power, GB Energy, ending North Sea oil, investing in renewables – defenders should speak louder. The TUC congress should cheer for the most radical pro-worker, pro-union programme in decades, against a Tory hailstorm claiming pay deals for union paymasters. Or will only the usual grumblers make the news? Business leaders relieved to have steady Starmer and Rachel Reeves at the helm need to speak up. Nervous Labour MPs whisper anxious advice when they should be galvanising support for good policies.

The budget looks set to take from the wealthiest, while protecting vulnerable people and public services. In the great noise, that principle needs defending. Means-testing the winter fuel allowance was unpopular, though it is right to take it from well-off pensioners. Where are reminders that the triple-lock this year delivered £900 a pensioner?

Rekindling Labour's pledge to abolish child poverty, expect the two-child benefit cap to be scrapped. But that won't be popular either. Public opinion is 60% against, thanks to false stories of "babies on benefits". Reeves would abolish it out of bravery not populism.

So there was no honeymoon, just inadequate recognition for Starmer's rapid competence in stamping out the riots. "Two-tier policing" accusations amount to subtle backing for imprisoned racist rioters. Endless attempts to destabilise No 10 with malevolent Sue Gray rivalry stories are spread by Tories fearing her efficacy. Labour insiders sound solid in telling themselves to hold steady, keep their nerve, ignore the flak, do what must be done. Trust voters to sense these serious people know what they're doing, and eventually things will get better.



Something in the atmosphere

With Gaia theory, James Lovelock gave humanity new ways to think about our home planet – but some of his biggest ideas were born out of a secret love affair

Jonathan Watts

Prof James Lovelock in 2004
TIM CUFF/ALAMY

Love rarely gets the credit it deserves for the advancement of science. Nor, for that matter, does hatred, greed, envy or any other emotion. Instead, this realm of knowledge tends to be idealised as something cold, hard, rational, neutral and objective, dictated by data rather than feelings. The life and work of James Lovelock is proof that this is neither possible nor desirable. In his work, he helped us understand that humans can never completely divorce ourselves from any living subject because we are interconnected and interdependent, all part of the same Earth system, which he called Gaia.

Our planet, he argued, behaves like a giant organism - regulating its temperature, discharging waste and cycling chemicals to maintain a healthy balance. Although highly controversial among scientists in the 1970s and 80s, this holistic view of the world had mass appeal, which stretched from New Age spiritual gurus to that stern advocate of free-market orthodoxy, Margaret Thatcher. Its insights into the link between nature and climate have since inspired many of the world's most influential climate scientists, philosophers and environmental campaigners. The French philosopher Bruno Latour said the Gaia Theory has reshaped humanity's understanding of our place in the universe as fundamentally as the ideas of Galileo Galilei. At its simplest, Gaia is about restoring an emotional connection with a living planet.

While the most prominent academics of the modern age made their names by delving ever deeper into narrow specialisms, Lovelock dismissed this as knowing "more and more about less and less" and worked instead on his own all-encompassing, and thus deeply unfashionable, theory of planetary life.

I first met Lovelock in the summer of 2020, during a break between pandemic lockdowns, when he was 101 years old. In person, he was utterly engrossing and kind. I had long wanted to interview the thinker who somehow managed to be both the inspiration for the green movement, and one of its fiercest critics. The account that follows, of the origins and development of Gaia theory, will probably surprise many of Lovelock's followers, as it surprised me.

Knowing he did not have long to live, Lovelock told me: "I can tell you things now I could not say before." The true nature of the relationships that made the man and the hypothesis were hidden or downplayed for decades. Some were military or industrial secrets. Others were too painful to share with the public, his own family and, sometimes, himself. Even in his darkest moments, Lovelock tended not to dwell on the causes of his unhappiness. He preferred to move on. Everything was a problem to be solved.

What I discovered, and what has been lost in the years since Lovelock first formulated Gaia theory in the 1960s, is that the initial work was not his alone. Another thinker, and earlier collaborator, played a far more important conceptual role than has been acknowledged until now. It was a woman, Dian Hitchcock, whose name has largely been overlooked in accounts of the world-famous Gaia theory.

Lovelock told me his greatest discovery was the biotic link between the Earth's life and its atmosphere. He envisaged it as a "cool flame" that has been burning off the planet's excess heat for billions of years. From this emerged the Gaia theory and an obsession with the atmosphere's relationship with life on Earth.

But he could not have seen it alone. Lovelock was guided by a love affair with Hitchcock, an American philosopher and systems analyst, who he met at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California. Like most brilliant women in the male-dominated world of science in the 1960s, Hitchcock struggled to have her ideas heard, let alone acknowledged. But Lovelock listened. And, as he later acknowledged, without Hitchcock, the world's understanding of itself may well have been very different.

Lovelock had arrived at JPL in 1961 at the invitation of Abe Silverstein, the director of Space Flight Programs at Nasa, who wanted an expert in chromatography to measure the chemical composition of the soil and air on other planets. For the science-fiction junkie Lovelock, it was "like a letter from a beloved. I was as excited and euphoric as if at the peak of passion." He had been given a front-row seat to the reinvention of the modern world.

California felt like the future. Hollywood was in its pomp, Disneyland had opened six years earlier, Venice Beach was about to become a cradle of youth culture and Bell Labs, Fairchild and Hewlett-Packard were pioneering the computer-chip technology that was to lead to the creation of Silicon Valley. JPL led the fields of space exploration, robotics and rocket technology.

In the 1950s, Wernher von Braun, the German scientist who designed the V-2 rockets that devastated London in the second world war, made JPL the base for the US's first successful satellite programme. It was his technology that the White House was relying on to provide the thrust for missions to the moon, Mars and Venus. By 1961, the San Gabriel hillside headquarters of JPL had become a meeting place for many of the planet's finest minds, drawing in Nobel winners, such as Joshua Lederberg, and emerging "pop scientists" like Carl Sagan. There was no more thrilling time to be in the space business.

Lovelock had a relatively minor role as a technical adviser, but he was, he told me, the first Englishman to join the US space programme: the most high-profile, and most lavishly funded, of cold war fronts.

Like most brilliant women in the male-dominated world of science in the 60s, Hitchcock struggled to have her ideas heard



Dian Hitchcock
COURTESY OF THE LOVELOCK FAMILY

Everyone on Earth had a stake in the US-USSR rivalry, but most people felt distant and powerless. Three years earlier, Lovelock had listened on his homemade shortwave radio in Finchley to the "beep, beep, beep" transmission of the USSR's Sputnik, the first satellite that humanity had put into orbit. Now he was playing with the super powers.

Dian Hitchcock had been hired by Nasa to keep tabs on the work being done at JPL to find life on Mars. The two organisations had been at loggerheads since 1958, when JPL had been placed under the jurisdiction of the newly created civilian space agency, Nasa, with day-to-day management carried out by the California Institute of Technology. JPL's veteran scientists bristled at being told what to do by their counterparts in the younger but more powerful federal organisation. Nasa was determined to regain control. Hitchcock was both their spy and their battering ram. Lovelock became her besotted ally.

They had first met in the JPL canteen, where Hitchcock introduced herself to Lovelock with a joke: "Do you realise your surname is a polite version of mine?" The question delighted Lovelock. As they got to know one another, he also came to respect Hitchcock's toughness in her dealings with her boss, her colleagues and the scientists. He later saw her yell furiously at a colleague in the street. "They were frightened of her. Nasa was very wise to send her down," he recalled. They found much in common. Both had struggled to find intellectual peers throughout their lives.

Hitchcock had grown used to being overlooked or ignored. She struggled to find anyone who would take her seriously. That and her inability to find people she could talk to on the same intellectual level left her feeling lonely. Lovelock seemed different. He came across as something of an outsider, and was more attentive than other men. "I was initially invisible. I couldn't find people who would listen to me. But Jim did want to talk to me and I ate it up," she said. "When I find someone I can talk to in depth it's a wonderful experience. It happens rarely."

They became not just collaborators but conspirators. Hitchcock was sceptical about JPL's approach to finding life on Mars, while Lovelock had complaints about the inadequacy of the equipment. This set them against powerful interests. At JPL, the most optimistic scientists were those with the biggest stake in the research. Vance Oyama, an effusively cheerful biochemist who had joined the JPL programme from the University of Houston the same year as Lovelock, put the prospects of life on Mars at 50%. He had a multimillion-dollar reason to be enthusiastic, as he was responsible for designing one of the life-detection experiments on the Mars lander: a small box containing water and a "chicken soup" of nutrients that were to be poured on to Martian soil.

Hitchcock suggested her employer, the Nasa contractor Hamilton Standard, hire Lovelock as a consultant, which meant she wrote the cheques for all his flights, hotel bills and other expenses during trips to JPL. As his former laboratory assistant Peter Simmonds put it, Lovelock was now "among the suits".

On 31 March 1965, Hitchcock submitted a scathing initial report to Hamilton Standard and its client Nasa, describing the plans of JPL's bioscience division as excessively costly and unlikely to yield useful data. She accused the biologists of "geocentrism" in their assumption that experiments to find life on Earth would be equally applicable to other planets. She felt that information about the presence of life could be found in signs of order - in homeostasis - not in one specific surface location, but at a wider level. As an example of how this might be achieved, she spoke highly of a method of atmospheric gas sampling that she had "initiated" with Lovelock. "I thought it obvious that the best experiment to begin with was composition of the atmosphere," she recalled. This plan was brilliantly simple and thus a clear threat to the complicated, multimillion-dollar experiments that had been on the table up to that point.

At a JPL strategy meeting, Lovelock weighed into the debate with a series of withering comments about



using equipment developed in the Mojave Desert to find life on Mars. He instead proposed an analysis of gases to assess whether the planet was in equilibrium (lifelessly flatlining) or disequilibrium (vivaciously erratic) based on the assumption that life discharged waste (excess heat and gases) into space in order to maintain a habitable environment. It would be the basis for his theory of a self-regulating planet, which he would later call Gaia.

Lovelock's first paper on detecting life on Mars was published in Nature in August 1965, under his name only. Hitchcock later complained that she deserved more credit, but she said nothing at the time.

The pair were not only working together by this stage, they were also having a love affair. "Our trysts were all in hotels in the US," Lovelock remembered. "We carried on the affair for six months or more." Sex and science were interwoven. Pillow talk involved imagining how a Martian scientist might find clues from the Earth's atmosphere that our planet was full of life. This was essential for the Gaia hypothesis. Hitchcock said she had posed the key question: what made life possible here and, apparently, nowhere else? This set them thinking about the Earth as a self-regulating system in which the atmosphere was a product of life.

From this revolutionary perspective, the gases surrounding the Earth suddenly began to take on an air of vitality. They were not just life-enabling, they were suffused with life, like the exhalation of a planetary being – or what they called in their private correspondence, the "great animal". Far more complex and irregular than the atmosphere of a dead planet like Mars, these gases burned with life.

They sounded out others. Sagan, who shared an office with Lovelock, provided a new dimension to their idea by asking how the Earth had remained relatively cool even though the sun had steadily grown hotter over the previous 8bn years. Lewis Kaplan at JPL and Peter Fellgett at Reading University were important early allies and listeners. (Later, the pioneering US biologist Lynn Margulis would make an essential contribution, providing an explanation of how Lovelock's theory might work in practice at a microbial level.) The long-dead physicist Erwin Schrödinger also provided an important key, according to Lovelock: "I knew nothing about finding life or what life was. The first thing I read was Schrödinger's What is Life? He said life chucked out high-entropy systems into the environment. That was the basis of Gaia; I realised planet Earth excretes heat."

Being asked to work at JPL was 'like a letter from a beloved. I was as excited and euphoric as if at the peak of passion'

A Nasa research centre in the 1960s

NASA/JPL

In the mid-60s, this was all still too new and unformed to be described as a hypothesis. But it was a whole new way of thinking about life on Earth. They were going further than Charles Darwin in arguing that life does not just adapt to the environment, it also shapes it. This meant evolution was far more of a two-way relationship than mainstream science had previously acknowledged. Life was no longer just a passive object of change; it was an agent. The couple were thrilled. They were pioneers making an intellectual journey nobody had made before.

It was to be the high point in their relationship.

The following two years were a bumpy return to Earth. Lovelock was uncomfortable with the management duties he had been given at JPL. The budget was an unwelcome responsibility for a man who had struggled with numbers since childhood, and he was worried he lacked the street smarts to sniff out the charlatans who were pitching bogus multimillion-dollar projects. Meanwhile, the biologists Oyama and Lederberg were going above his head and taking every opportunity to put him down. "Oyama would come up and say: 'What are you doing there? You are wasting your time, Nasa's time,'" Lovelock recalled. "He was one of the few unbearable persons I have known in my life." In 1966, they had their way, and Lovelock and Hitchcock's plans for an alternative Mars life-exploration operation using atmospheric analysis were dropped by the US space agency. "I am sorry to hear that politics has interfered with your chances of a subcontract from Nasa," Fellgett commiserated.

Cracks started to appear in Lovelock's relationship with Hitchcock. He had tried to keep the affair secret, but lying weighed heavily on him. They could never go to the theatre, concerts or parks in case they were spotted together, but close friends could see what was happening. "They naturally gravitated towards one another. It was obvious," Simmonds said. When they corresponded, Lovelock insisted Hitchcock never discuss anything but work and science in her letters, which he knew would be opened by his wife, Helen, who also worked as his secretary. But intimacy and passion still came across in discussions of their theories.

Lovelock's family noticed a change in his behaviour. The previous year, his mother had suspected he was unhappy in his marriage and struggling with a big decision. Helen openly ridiculed his newly acquired philosophical pretensions and way of talking – both no doubt influenced by Hitchcock. "Who does he think he is? A second Einstein?"

she asked scornfully. Helen would refer to Hitchcock as "Madam" or "Fanny by Gaslight", forbade her husband from introducing Hitchcock to other acquaintances, and insisted he spend less time in the US. But he could not stay away, and Helen could not help but fret: "Why do you keep asking me what I'm worried about? You know I don't like (you) all those miles away. I'm only human, dear, and nervous. I can only sincerely hope by now you have been to JPL and found that you do not have to stay anything like a month. I had a night of nightmares … The bed is awfully big and cold without you."

So, Lovelock visited JPL less frequently and for shorter periods. Hitchcock filled the physical void by throwing her energy into their shared intellectual work. Taking the lead, she began drafting a summary of their life-detection ideas for an ambitious series of journal papers about exobiology (the study of the possibility of life on other planets) that she hoped would persuade either the US Congress or the British parliament to fund a 100-inch infrared telescope to search planetary atmospheres for evidence of life.

But nothing seemed to be going their way. In successive weeks, their jointly authored paper on life detection was rejected by two major journals: the Proceedings of the Royal Society in the UK and then Science in the US. The partners agreed to swallow their pride and submit their work to the little-known journal Icarus. Hitchcock admitted to feeling downhearted in a handwritten note from 11 November 1966: "Enclosed is a copy of our masterpiece, now doubly blessed since it has been rejected by Science. No explanation so I suppose it got turned down by all the reviewers … Feel rather badly about the rejection. Have you ever had trouble like this, publishing anything? … As for going for Icarus, I can't find anybody who's even heard of the journal."

Hitchcock refused to give up. In late 1966 and early 1967, she sent a flurry of long, intellectually vivacious letters to Lovelock about the papers they were working on together. Her correspondence during this period was obsessive, hesitant, acerbic, considerate, critical, encouraging and among the most brilliant in the Lovelock archives. These missives can be read as foundation stones for the Gaia hypothesis or as thinly disguised love letters.

In one she lamented that they were unable to meet in person to discuss their work, but she enthused about how far their intellectual journey had taken them. "I'm getting rather impressed with us as I read Biology and the Exploration of Mars – with the fantastic importance of the topic. Wow, if this works and we do find life on Mars we will be in the limelight," she wrote. Further on, she portrayed the two of them as explorers, whose advanced ideas put them up against the world, or at least against the senior members of the JPL biology team.

The most impressive of these letters is a screed in which Hitchcock wrote to Lovelock with an eloquent summary of "our reasoning" and how this shared approach went beyond mainstream science. "We want to see whether a biota exists – not whether single animals exist," she said. "It is also the nature of single species to affect their living and non-living environments – to leave traces of themselves and their activity everywhere. Therefore we conclude that the biota must leave its characteristic signature on the 'non-living' portions of the environment." Hitchcock then went on to describe how the couple had tried to identify life, in a letter dated 13 December 1966:

"We started our search for the unmistakable physical signature of the terrestrial biota, believing that if we found it, it would – like all other effects of biological entities – be recognisable as such by virtue of the fact that it represents 'information' in the pure and simple sense of a state of affairs which is enormously improbable on non-biological grounds … We picked the atmosphere as the most likely residence of the signature, on the grounds that the chemical interactions with atmospheres are probably characteristic of all biotas. We then tried to find something in our atmosphere which would, for example, tell a good Martian chemist that life exists here. We made false starts because we foolishly looked for one giveaway component. There are none. Came the dawn and we saw that the total atmospheric mixture is a peculiar one, which is in fact so information-full that it is improbable. And so forth. And now we tend to view the atmosphere almost as something itself alive, because it is the product of the biota and an essential channel by which elements of the great living animal communicate – it is indeed the milieu internal which is maintained by the biota as a whole for the wellbeing of its components. This is getting too long. Hope it helps. Will write again soon."



From their revolutionary perspective, the gases surrounding the Earth suddenly began to take on an air of vitality

Lovelock in 1962
DONALD UHRBROCK

With hindsight, these words are astonishingly prescient and poignant. Their view of the atmosphere "almost as something itself alive" was to become a pillar of Gaia theory. The connection between life and the atmosphere, which was only intuited here, would be firmly established by climatologists. It was not just the persuasiveness of the science that resonates in this letter, but the intellectual passion with which ideas are developed and given lyrical expression. The poetic conclusion – "came the dawn" – reads as a hopeful burst of illumination and a sad intimation that their night together may be drawing to a close.

Their joint paper, "Life detection by atmospheric analysis", was submitted to Icarus in December 1966. Lovelock acknowledged it was superior to his earlier piece for Nature: "Anybody who was competent would see the difference, how the ideas had been cleared up and presented in a much more logical way." He insisted Hitchcock be lead author. Although glad to have him on board because she had never before written a paper and would have struggled to get published if she had put it solely under her name, she told me she had no doubt she deserved most of the credit: "I remember when I wrote that paper, I hardly let him put a word in."

The year 1967 was to prove horrendous for them both, professionally and personally. In fact, it was a dire moment for the entire US space programme. In January, three astronauts died in a flash fire during a test on an Apollo 204 spacecraft, prompting soul-searching and internal investigations. US politicians were no longer willing to write blank cheques for a race to Mars. Public priorities were shifting as the Vietnam war and the civil rights movement gained ground, and Congress slashed the Nasa budget.

The affair between Hitchcock and Lovelock was approaching an ugly end. Domestic pressures were becoming intense. Helen was increasingly prone to illness and resentment. On 15 March 1967, she wrote to Lovelock at JPL to say: "It seems as if you have been gone for ages," and scornfully asked about Hitchcock: "Has Madam arrived yet?" Around this time, Lovelock's colleague at JPL, Peter Simmonds, remembered things coming to a head. "He strayed from the fold. Helen told him to 'get on a plane or you won't have a marriage' or some such ultimatum."

Lovelock was forced into an agonising decision about Hitchcock. "We were in love with each other. It was very difficult. I think that was one of the worst times in my life. [Helen's health] was getting much worse. She needed me. It was clear where duty led me and I had four kids. Had Helen been fit and well, despite the size of the family, it would have been easier to go off." Instead, he decided to ditch Hitchcock. "I determined to break it off. It made me very miserable … I just couldn't continue."

The breakup, when it finally came, was brutal. Today, more than 50 years on, Hitchcock is still pained by the way things ended. "I think it was 1967. We were both checking into the Huntington and got rooms that were separated by a conference room. Just after I opened the door, a door on the opposite side was opened by Jim. We looked at each other and I said something like: 'Look, Jim, this is really handy.' Whereupon he closed the door and never spoke to me again. I was shattered. Probably 'heartbroken' is the appropriate term here. He didn't give me any explanation. He didn't say anything about Helen. He just dropped me. I was puzzled and deeply hurt. It had to end, but he could have said something … He could not possibly have been more miserable than I was."

Hitchcock was reluctant to let go. That summer, she sent Lovelock a clipping of her interview with a newspaper in Connecticut, below the headline "A Telescopic Look at Life on Other Planets", an article outlining the bid she and Lovelock were preparing to secure financial support for a telescope. In November, she wrote a memo for her company on the importance of her continued collaboration with Lovelock and stressing their work "must be published".

But the flame had been extinguished. The last record of direct correspondence between the couple is an official invoice, dated 18 March 1968, and formally signed "consultant James E Lovelock". Hitchcock was fired by Hamilton Standard soon after. "They were not pleased that I had anything at all to do with Mars," she recalled. The same was probably also true for her relationship with Lovelock.

The doomed romance could not have been more symbolic. Hitchcock and Lovelock had transformed humanity's view of its place in the universe. By revealing the interplay between life and the atmosphere, they had shown how fragile are the conditions for existence on this planet, and how unlikely are the prospects for life elsewhere in the solar system. They had brought romantic dreams of endless expansion back down to Earth with a bump. ●

This is an edited extract from The Many Lives of James Lovelock: Science, Secrets and Gaia Theory, published by Canongate on 12 September and available at guardianbookshop.com

*
Jonathan Watts *is the Guardian's global environment editor*

Letters

guardian.letters@theguardian.com
@guardianletters

Established 1906

Country diary

Sumburgh Head, Shetland

According to the Met Office, the Shetland Islands are some of the windiest places in the UK, and they're living up to their reputation. Our planned bird cruise to the gannet colony of Noss is cancelled. Instead we make for Sumburgh Head, the spectacular southernmost point of the Shetland mainland.

White-capped waves crash far below the cliffs and sweep out to the horizon, spindrift tosses up mini-rainbows and creamy plumes of sea froth float up and over. A few puffins – tammie norries in the Shetland dialect, which has its roots in Scots, English and Nordic languages – are still couried into ledges, and a bonxie (great skua) powers past; a lone gannet – a solan – circles briefly at eye level, as small lines of them fly low across the waves, cormorants cutting across their path. I'm always inordinately pleased to see gannets now, after bird flu decimated their colonies. A friend here tells me that some gannets' pale blue eyes have turned black – a possible sign of surviving avian flu – but it's too blustery to hold my binoculars steady enough to see for myself.

The grey and white stiff-winged fulmars thrive in this kind of weather, catching and managing the updraughts with uncanny precision, hanging in position like a person teetering on an invisible highwire, as they wait for their moment to alight on the narrowest of ledges. The windier it gets, the more they seem to love it. Their chicks are moving away from their fluffy excess and are exercising their wings before their first descent into air.

The beautiful pink carpets of thrift are gone now, their flowers stiffened and bleached by the salty air, though the daisy-like sea mayweeds are holding on to their heads still. The sea churns and froths against the rocks, transforming from Arctic bluey-grey to Mediterranean turquoise, and all shades of blue in between, to white.

It's hard to hear anything above the roar of wind and water, though I know that somewhere down there the puffins, the tysties (black guillemots) and other auks that made these cliffs their home will be heading to their wintering grounds out to sea. I drink in the sea-salty air, let the updraught whip my troubles away, and wonder how many words for wind Shetlanders have.

Amanda Thomson

To reduce suicide rates, we need to reach people

The stark rise in the number of lives lost to suicide is extremely concerning and action is needed to address this (Suicide levels in England and Wales the highest since 1999, 30 August).

There has been a global decline in mental health in recent decades, as highlighted by the Lancet Psychiatry commission on youth mental health. Many people are affected by societal challenges in areas such as the economy, environment, social isolation and social media. Worryingly, a significant number of people who die by suicide have never been in contact with mental health services. More must be done to encourage people to come forward and to make sure they receive the best possible care.

All health staff should be alert to the level of risk in their patients and coordinate the appropriate care. The Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) continues to work with NHS England and NHS Wales to improve national guidance in safety assessments. National suicide prevention strategies should also be adequately resourced if they are to make a lasting difference. We need to act together to address societal changes, provide timely and compassionate care, and save lives.

Dr Jeya Balakrishna
Chair, patient safety group, RCPsych

● Why are we surprised that suicide levels are at their highest since 1999, when the societal message is increasingly that you are worthless if you do not have a job and are not contributing financially to society? Men aged 45 to 64 have the highest suicide rate (22.4 per 100,000). This is the time when men are starting to retire, being made redundant, becoming ill or incapacitated – challenging their sense of self-worth and identity if it is encapsulated by being economically viable and having a job.

We need a strategy for men that places equal value on helping others, voluntary work, continued learning, caring for grandchildren and the benefits of experience if we are going to avoid a Logan's Run world, where men feel everyone would be better off without them once they age.

Dr Chris Allen
Chair, Maidenhead Men in Sheds

● *Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org*

Schools overlook writers of colour

It saddened me that Nell Frizzell and those who commented on her article did not appear to read any books by writers of colour at school (G2, 29 August). The 2019 Lit in Colour report by Penguin Books and the Runnymede Trust found that 0.7% of students study a book by a writer of colour at GCSE and 0.1% study a book by a woman of colour. At most, 7% of students in England study a book by a woman at GCSE.

Some exam boards have started to take steps to improve this by including at least one writer of colour on set text lists at GCSE and A-level, but take-up by schools is slow and there is little appetite or incentive for change.

It is only now, as head of English, and having taught for 15 years, that I have the authority to insist that students study a book by a writer of colour at every key stage in the schools in which I teach, but the burden and desire for change can't be left with teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds like me.

If we want to see an end to racism in this country and an end to the racially aggravated hatred we saw in the riots over the summer, we must begin by reviewing what is taught in our schools.

Thishani Wijesinghe
Guildford, Surrey

No evidence GCSEs are harder than IGCSEs

At Oxford Home Schooling, we have supported students following a wide range of GCSE and (latterly) IGCSE courses for more than 30 years, and we have no vested interest in either system. But there is no evidence that GCSEs are harder (Letters, 29 August). Where the specifications are not interchangeable (as they often are), the exam boards have done everything they can to make them equally difficult and to ensure that a grade 7, for example, in one is comparable to a grade 7 in the other.

Nor is there any evidence that private schools and their students are motivated by the chance to do coursework, or that that would give them an advantage. In fact a high proportion of IGCSE candidates follow the non-coursework option.

IGCSEs gained a footing in the UK 10 to 15 years ago precisely because they offered a chance to gain qualifications *without* the need for non-exam assessment (coursework). Their continued use by UK private schools and, indeed, Oxford Home Schooling, is as much a consequence of inertia as anything else.

There are many reasons to be sceptical about the UK's private schools, but this is not one of them.

Dr Nick Smith
Principal, Oxford Home Schooling

A walk in the woods led to the ghost orchid

On a rainy, muddy September afternoon in 1982 my wife-to-be Valerie and I took a walk in the woods in Herefordshire. We stumbled upon *Epipogium aphyllum*, AKA the ghost orchid ('Holy grail' orchid found in UK for first time since 2009, 28 August).

We had as much pleasure as finding it in making it a dream come true for Dr Charles Walker, then aged 92, of Herefordshire Botanical Society, who'd lived in hope of ever seeing this plant, by taking him to the site. It had been chewed by slugs and we were allowed to keep the flower, which was subsequently preserved and donated to Amgueddfa Cymru (Museum Wales), where hopefully it remains.

The discovery was kept very secret and so as far as I recall it didn't get a mention in the Guardian at the time. Perhaps you'd like to make up for this 42 years later?

Mark Richards
Leominster, Herefordshire

Illya Kuryakin and a total ellipsis of the heart

I suspect that Liz Taylor (Letters, 30 August) is either misremembering her school pencil case or is 10 years younger than I am. She is unlikely to have drawn "I ❤ Illya" on it. The first time I saw the heart symbol used for the word "love" was the in the I ❤ New York advertising campaign, which Wikipedia tells me dates from 1977. The Man from UNCLE was of course on TV in the 1960s.

By the time Victoria Wood wrote the play Talent (which I saw at the Crucible in Sheffield in 1978), our love for Illya was already nostalgic – as evidenced by the closing lines of the song 14 Again: "When I was funny, I was famous, I was never ignored / I was a crazy girl, I had to laugh / I had Illya Kuryakin's autograph / I had no idea you could wake up feeling bored."

(I'll try to get out more, but there's a THRUSH outside my window…)

Wendy Bradley
Sheffield

Corrections and clarifications

● **Kim Deal's album Nobody Loves You More will be released on 22 November as stated in the endnote of an interview with her, not "October" as it said in the text. Also, the album features Josh Klinghoffer, not John Frusciante, and Deal's father was called Ed, not Robert ('I am intrigued by failure', 30 August, G2, p6).**

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Rose garden lacking on road to recovery

Before it was a song, the words "I never promised you a rose garden" (Letters, 30 August) belonged to the kindly psychoanalyst Dr Fried in the eponymous semi-autobiographical novel by Hannah Green. She wished to convey to her young patient that there was no guarantee that the road to recovery would be a pleasant one. Indeed, things might have to get worse before they got better.

Rosy Lovelady
Tilehurst, Berkshire

● As a retired secondary school teacher, I note that one suggestion for the long-overdue reform of Ofsted is that "new regional teams will work with institutions to address areas of weakness" (Report, 2 September). I've got an idea: let's call these regional teams "local education authorities" and their staff "advisers".

Ruth Eversley
Paulton, Somerset

● Belief in the benefits of Guinness and similar drinks for pregnant or newly delivered mothers goes further back than the 1960s (Letters, 31 August). In Anthony Trollope's 1877 novel Is He Popenjoy?, the dowager Marchioness of Brotherton urges bottled porter – "a pint at lunch and a pint at dinner" – on her reluctant daughter-in-law, citing the advice given to her by physicians during her own pregnancies 50 years earlier.

Sally Jaine
Totnes, Devon

● As an alternative to the restorative powers of tea and coffee, a bottle of Guinness was on offer at my first blood donation in the early 1970s. I accepted it, and it spurred me on to reach 50 donations and a silver pen, but I never encountered alcohol at the sessions again.

Jim Samson
Cockermouth, Cumbria

● A local pub is advertising its Boxing Day menu. This year's first?

Moira Robinson
Kidlington, Oxfordshire



Gavron in 2008. She was keen on providing access to outside space for families and improving the environment
MARTIN ARGLES/ THE GUARDIAN

Nicky Gavron

Influential Labour local government politician who served as the first deputy mayor of London

Nicky Gavron, who has died aged 82, was a leading London politician whose career spanned 50 years from the 1970s. She was the first deputy mayor of London, following a successful career at Haringey council and as chair of the London planning advisory committee (LPAC), and a Labour member of the London assembly for 21 years. She was well known for her powers of persuasion and capacity to get things done.

Gavron stood to be a member of the London assembly in the first Greater London Authority elections in 2000, winning the Enfield and Haringey constituency. On the same day, Ken Livingstone was elected as mayor of London as an independent; Tony Blair, having decided democracy should be restored to London, had drawn the line at the former Greater London council leader being Labour's candidate. Soon after, Livingstone appointed Gavron as his deputy.

In that role, she was influential in preparing the first London Plan, a legally required document that shaped policy in relation to infrastructure, planning, transport, housing and other aspects of the capital's development.

Once it had been consulted upon and subject to an inquiry, the London Plan, published in 2004, had the force of law, requiring local boroughs to conform to it. Gavron also encouraged Livingstone to involve the architect Richard Rogers, who created an architecture and urbanism unit at the GLA.

The original London Plan and its successors under subsequent mayors were heavily influenced by Gavron's work at LPAC (created to provide strategic planning advice for the capital after the abolition of the GLC) and as deputy mayor.

Policy documents published by Livingstone's GLC from 1981 to 1986 had been much less concerned with environmental sustainability, air quality, high streets, urban density and climate change than those produced after he became mayor in 2000. Of course the policy world had moved on, but there is no doubt Gavron's impact had been crucial. She was also an advocate for the congestion charge introduced in central London in 2003.

While at City Hall, Gavron worked with Livingstone and his adviser Mark Watts to create a network of cities to share best practice on climate policy, with support from the Clinton Foundation. This formed the basis of the C40 group of mayors and city leaders tackling climate change at the urban level.

She remained Livingstone's deputy mayor until June 2003, in the run-up to the 2004 election. Gavron had been selected as the Labour mayoral nomination but stood aside when the party readmitted Livingstone in January 2004 and allowed him to be their official candidate. She was reappointed as deputy mayor after the election and stayed in office until Boris Johnson defeated Livingstone in 2008.

Remaining on the assembly as a London-wide member, she chaired committees overseeing housing and planning. She finally stepped down from the GLA in 2021.

> **Many of the results of her policies can be found in the streets and arts venues of the city**

Born in Worcester, she was the daughter of Clayton Coates and Elisabet Horstmeyer. Nicky's mother had arrived from Germany in 1936, fleeing Nazi persecution of the Jewish population.

Later in life, Gavron revealed her mother had been chosen to dance in front of Hitler at the opening ceremony for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, though was barred when her religion was discovered.

After Worcester girls' grammar school, Nicky moved to London to study history of art at the Courtauld Institute before lecturing at the Camberwell School of Art. She married the businessman Robert Gavron in 1967, and together they brought up his two sons from a previous marriage and their two daughters, before divorcing in 1987.

Gavron became involved in local political activity as part of a 70s and 80s campaign to stop the widening of the Archway Road, a section of the A1 in north London. The government, GLC and the local council wanted to drive a motorway-scale road through picturesque Highgate. A series of public inquiries in the 70s articulated growing opposition, including from Gavron, as well as from Livingstone. By the 80s the GLC and Haringey council changed sides from pro- to anti-road building, and eventually, in 1990, the Conservative transport secretary Cecil Parkinson axed the project.

This experience, coupled with a strong personal interest in environmentalism and the arts, led Gavron to stand for Labour in Haringey, her local council. She was elected in 1986, at the height of a raging political battle between Margaret Thatcher's government and the left. The leader of the council, Bernie Grant, had been a key figure in fighting rate capping; along with Lambeth's Ted Knight and leaders from Liverpool and Sheffield, he was also part of a radical anti-Thatcher bloc in local government. Five weeks before Gavron was elected as a councillor, Livingstone had been ousted as leader of the GLC as the result of its abolition.

The toxicity of London politics at the time was at odds with Gavron's personal style. She was committed to improving families' access to outdoor space, widening participation in the arts and improving the environment. Green politics was in its infancy: there was some political concern for "ecology" and growing antipathy for big road schemes, but issues such as road pollution and the design of cities were well down the priorities of most politicians.

GLC abolition led to the creation of several city-wide, borough-based committees. One of these was LPAC, designed to be a light-touch, research-focused body to consider London's planning needs. Gavron became deputy chair in 1989 and was chair from 1994 to 2000.

LPAC formulated new policy that

obituaries@theguardian.com
@guardianobits

was to be influential when the Blair government eventually recreated London-wide government in 2000. Her leadership (and that of her predecessor as chair, the Liberal Democrat politician Sally Hamwee) saw a focus on the environment, better transport infrastructure, a strong partnership with the private sector and the evolution of a growth-driven "global city" agenda.

During John Major's administration, relations between London local authorities and the government improved. Labour councils became more moderate. Tory ministers such as Steve Norris and John Gummer warmed to the zeal for partnership embodied by LPAC, embracing, among other things, the London Pride Partnership, which brought together local authorities and the business community and in 1995 published a public-private prospectus for London's future.

Arts policy in the capital after the abolition of the GLC was shaped by the Greater London arts association and its successor organisation the London arts board. Gavron was a board member of both, giving voice to her concern for culture and the arts. Back in Haringey, she had been a co-founder of Jacksons Lane arts centre, which opened in 1975 and would have been abolished had the Archway Road been widened. In 2023 she was awarded a pink plaque in recognition of her work.

She was chair of the Local Government Association's planning committee (1997-99) and represented London at the London and south east regional planning conference. She was a member of the government's commission for integrated transport (1999-2002) and the sustainable development commission (2001-03).

In 2022 she was named New Londoner of the Year by New London Architecture for her contribution to the capital. Many of the results of Gavron's policies for London are to be found in the streets, playgrounds and arts venues of the city. One is particularly tangible: the circular Overground line, which she called "Orbirail". It now links Highbury to Willesden to Clapham Junction and on to Peckham, Whitechapel, Shoreditch and back to Highbury. Without Gavron's persistence, this low-cost, high-benefit line might never have been built.

She enjoyed parties, inviting people to her home, and the social side of political life. Despite failing eyesight, she continued to work assiduously and was in the process of co-writing a book about LPAC.

Gavron is survived by her daughters, Jessica and Sarah, her stepson Jeremy and 10 grandchildren. Her other stepson, Simon, predeceased her.

Tony Travers

Nicky (Felicia Nicolette) Gavron, politician, born 24 November 1941; died 30 August 2024

George Pickett

Distinguished physicist known for his work on nuclear refrigeration

"Although absolute zero will for ever remain beyond our reach, we have achieved probably the next best thing." These were the words of George Pickett, who has died aged 85, discussing his work on nuclear refrigeration at Lancaster University, the purpose of which was to produce the lowest possible laboratory temperatures, a necessity for numerous scientific studies.

At such low temperatures – close to -273.15C, or what is known as absolute zero, the point at which an object has no heat at all – the motion of atoms and subatomic particles ceases almost completely. The rules of classical physics break down, allowing scientists to study the world of quantum mechanics, determining how elementary particles move and interact.

Understanding these concepts offers insight into materials such as superconductors, which allow electricity to flow without resistance or loss over great distances, or superfluids, which display very low viscosity as their atoms lose their usual random motion. Superfluids can be used for cooling magnets with strong magnetic fields and for helping detect exotic subatomic particles.

However, the most significant application of Pickett's work lay in increasing our understanding of the big bang, the early origins of the universe and the creation of its structures, such as the chains of galaxies that now populate space.

He and his team worked with helium-3, a stable isotope of the more common helium-4, which is used for party balloons. Formed in stars, helium-3 can be heated to very high temperatures, but also becomes a liquid superfluid if cooled close to absolute zero.

In its superfluid state, helium-3 provides a tool for studying the properties of the early universe. For instance, it can mimic cosmic phenomena such as the turbulent expansion of the universe following the big bang, and the subsequent formation of stable structures such as galaxies. Because it can exist at extremely high temperatures – such as those present at the formation of our universe 13.8bn years ago – and also very low temperatures, similar to that of the residual radiation left over from the big bang (-270.424C), it is practical for modelling how our universe evolved. Pickett noted these qualities and exploited them.

In the early 1990s, Pickett's team conducted experiments, later dubbed "the big bang in a drop of helium", which aimed to capture the first fraction of a second of our universe's existence, before it began to cool rapidly. Because classical physics ceases at the low temperatures where helium-3 becomes a superfluid, it is possible, in a laboratory, to heat the liquid to the extremely high temperatures present in the big bang by passing neutrons through it and without it becoming a gas. At first the heated liquid helium-3 was homogenous and uniform, exactly like the universe at the moment of its creation. But then the neutrons began to create bubbles and vortices, and, as it cooled, the helium began to display areas of greater and lesser density.

The more dense areas were analogues of the over-dense regions in the real universe whose gravity would later drag in matter to form galaxies with space and vacuum between them. "We were hopeful we would see such an outcome," Pickett later said. "But really we had no idea how successful the end result would be."

Although Pickett did not become a Nobel laureate himself, when the American team of David Lee, Douglas Osheroff and Robert Richardson won the 1996 Nobel prize for physics for their discovery of superfluidity in helium-3, they cited this earlier work of Pickett and his team as being crucial to their success. Pickett's team did, however, achieve and hold for many years the record for the lowest temperature ever attained when, in 1993, they cooled copper immersed in liquid helium-3 to 7 microkelvin, or seven millionths of a degree above absolute zero.

Pickett was born in the village of Biddenham, Bedfordshire, to George, an engineer, and Lelia (nee Okell), and from Bedford modern school went on to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he gained a DPhil in physics. After a post at Helsinki University, Finland, in 1970 he joined Lancaster University, where he would remain throughout the rest of his career. In 1988 he was awarded a chair in low-temperature physics and went on to develop the ultra-low temperature laboratory that would define his academic career.

Fluent in various Scandinavian and Slavic languages, he received honorary doctorates from universities across Europe, while in the UK he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1997, and the following year, alongside a Lancaster University colleague, Tony Guénault, was jointly awarded the Simon Memorial prize, conferred every three years for work in experimental or theoretical low-temperature physics.

In 2002 he helped create the European Microkelvin Platform – a consortium of ultra-low-temperature laboratories that trains young researchers in the discipline.

His wife, Deborah (nee Fonge), whom he met in Oxford while she was working for the university forestry department, predeceased him, as did his subsequent partner, Cora Martin. He is survived by the daughters from his marriage, Elizabeth and Catherine.

Mick O'Hare

George Richard Pickett, physicist, born 10 April 1939; died 21 July 2024

Fluent in various Scandinavian and Slavic languages, he received several European honorary doctorates

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY



Pickett in 2019 with a dilution refrigerator designed and built with his colleagues at Lancaster University

Birthdays

Aileen Adams, anaesthetist, 101; **Meg Beresford**, former general secretary, CND, 87; **David Brabham**, racing driver, 59; **Dick Clement**, screenwriter, 87; **Paddy Considine**, actor and film director, 51; **Tracy Edwards**, yachtswoman, 62; **Werner Herzog**, film and opera director, 82; **Lady (Valerie) Howarth of Breckland**, founding chief executive, Childline, 84; **Margaret Howell**, fashion designer, 78; **Lord (Julian) Hunt of Chesterton**, meteorologist and former director, Met Office, 83; **Michael Keaton**, actor, 73; **George Lazenby**, actor, 85; **Karita Mattila**, soprano, 64; **Rose McGowan**, actor, 51; **John McGrath**, artistic director and chief executive, Manchester international festival, 62; **Mark Ramprakash**, cricketer, 55; **Bukayo Saka**, footballer, 23; **Jane Sixsmith**, hockey player, 57; **Al Stewart**, musician, 79; **Isabella Tree**, conservationist and writer, 60; **Johnny Vegas**, comedian and actor, 54; **Loudon Wainwright III**, singer and songwriter, 78; **Annabelle Wallis**, actor, 40; **Ben Youngs**, rugby player, 35.



The England and Surrey cricketer Mark Ramprakash is 55 today

Letter

As well as his other starring roles in Liverpool journalism, Peter Trollope (Other lives, 31 August) was also, in his 20s, the night news editor of the Liverpool Daily Post, the Echo's morning sister and then a power in the north-west.

To his skill at instantly spotting stories, marshalling his journalists, and mentoring fumbling trainees of his own age, he also added his own particular genius, which was a little touch of energetic anarchy.

Night shifts on newspapers have their special longueurs, which Peter filled by organising cricket matches with bats and balls constructed, appropriately, from copies of the Daily Post. These sadly ended after a splendid six sailed across the room to land in front of the august chief subeditor on deadline.

Charles Nevin

Reread our obituaries of the French chef Michel Guérard and the novelist and writer Edna O'Brien
theguardian.com/obituaries

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

4	7	9	3	2	8	1	6	5
2	6	5	1	7	4	3	9	8
1	8	3	9	5	6	2	7	4
5	1	8	4	6	2	7	3	9
3	4	7	8	9	1	5	2	6
6	9	2	7	3	5	4	8	1
7	3	4	5	8	9	6	1	2
8	2	1	6	4	7	9	5	3
9	5	6	2	1	3	8	4	7

Medium

1	8	6	9	5	3	4	2	7
7	2	9	8	4	6	3	1	5
4	5	3	1	7	2	8	6	9
3	9	7	4	8	1	6	5	2
5	4	1	6	2	7	9	3	8
2	6	8	3	9	5	1	7	4
8	3	5	7	6	9	2	4	1
9	1	2	5	3	4	7	8	6
6	7	4	2	1	8	5	9	3

Codeword



Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,479

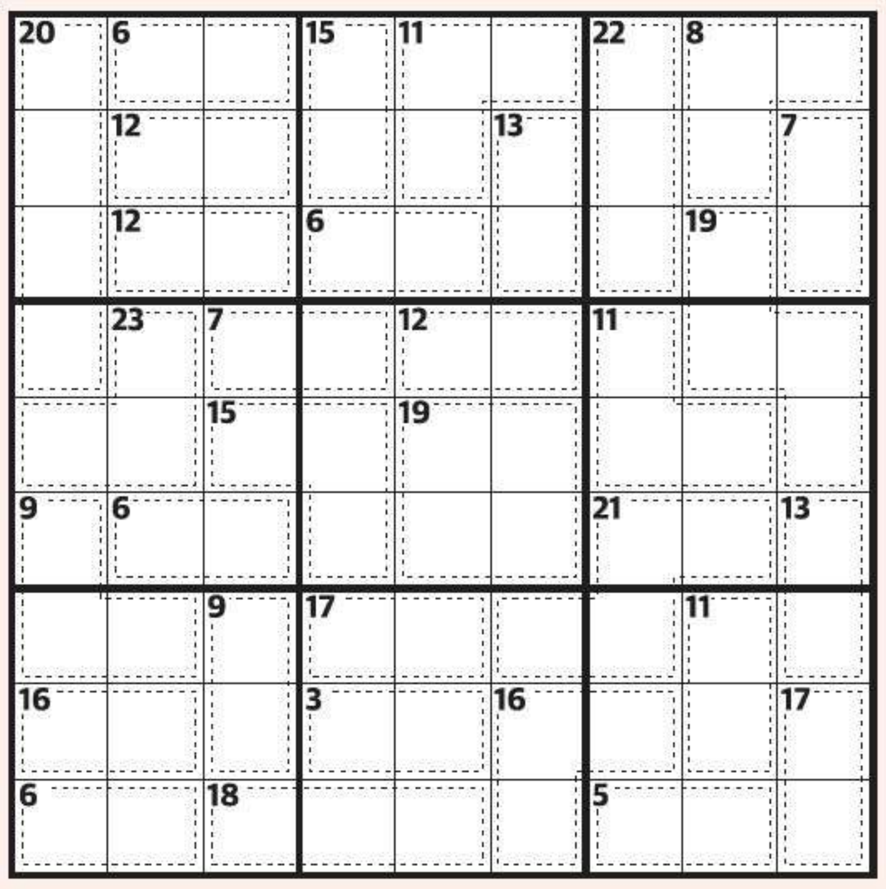


😟 **Stuck?** For help call **0906 200 83 83**. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate). **Want more?** Get access to more than 4,000 puzzles at **theguardian.com/crossword.** To buy puzzle books, visit **guardianbookshop.com** or call **0330 333 6846.**

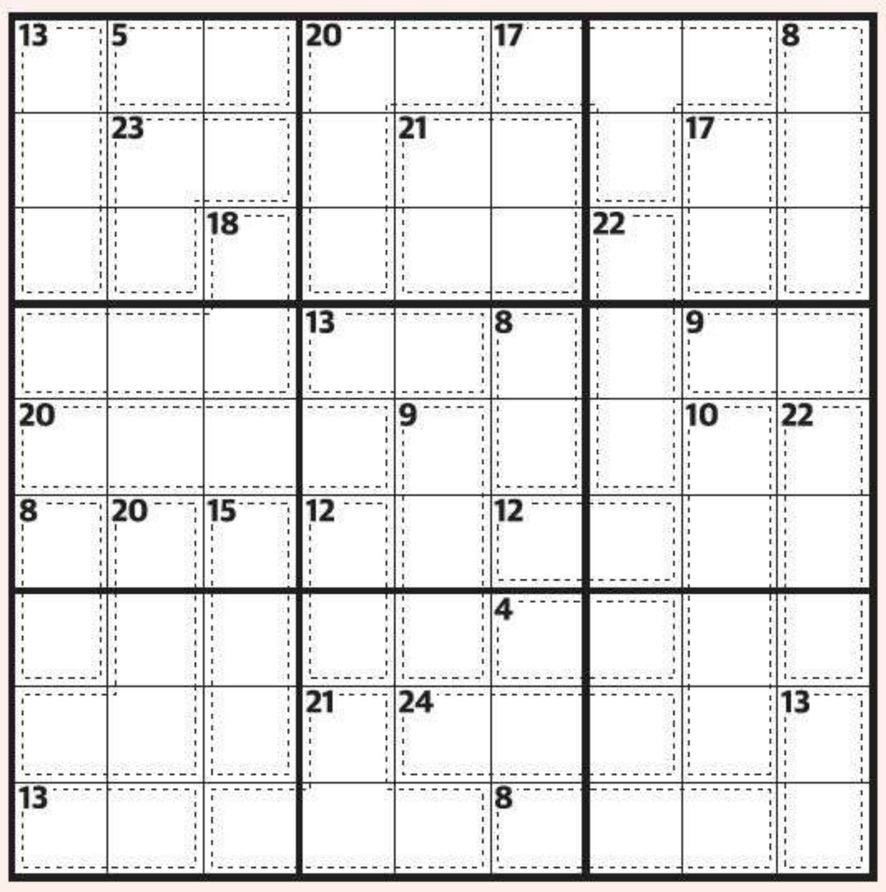
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

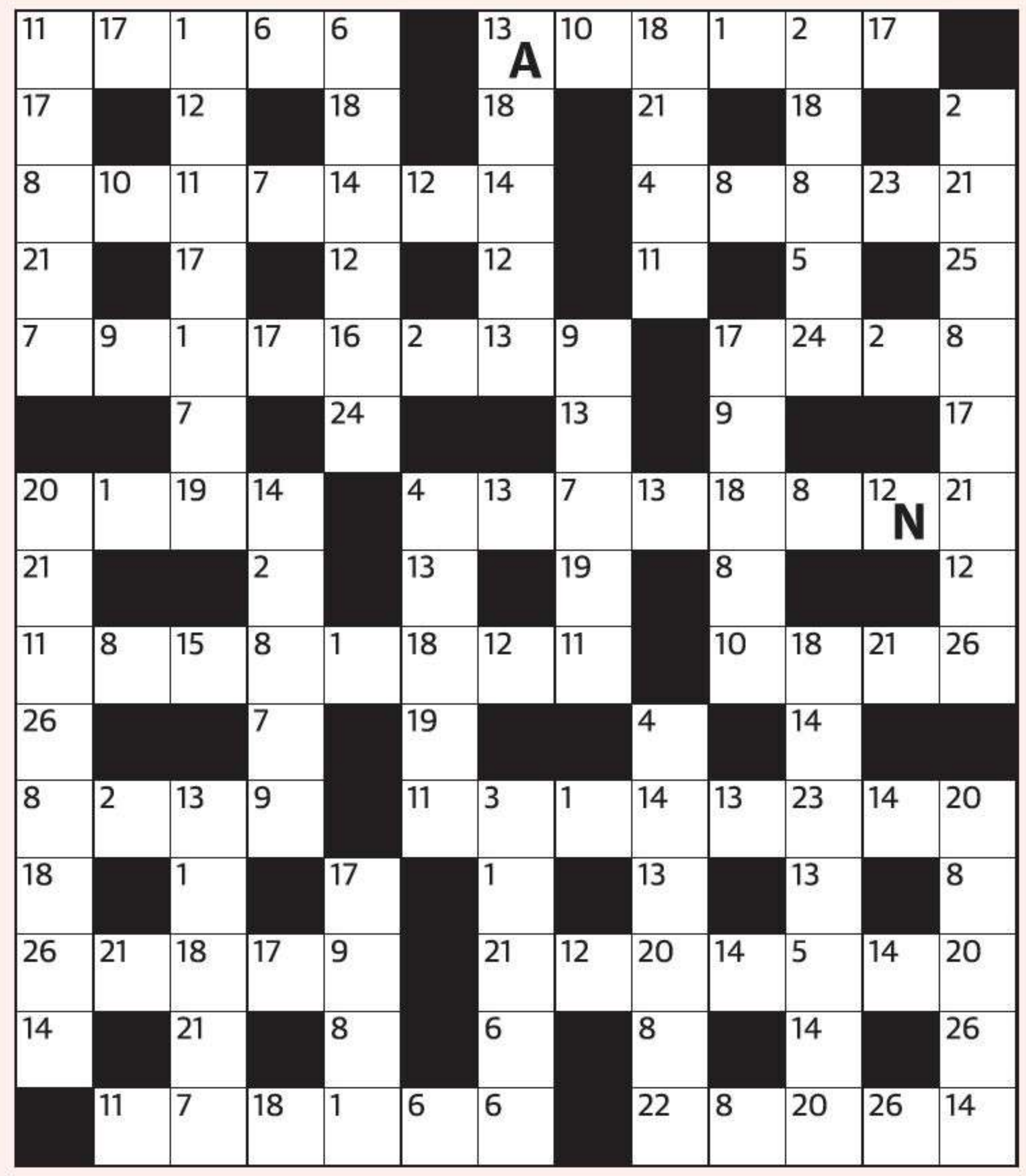


Medium



Codeword

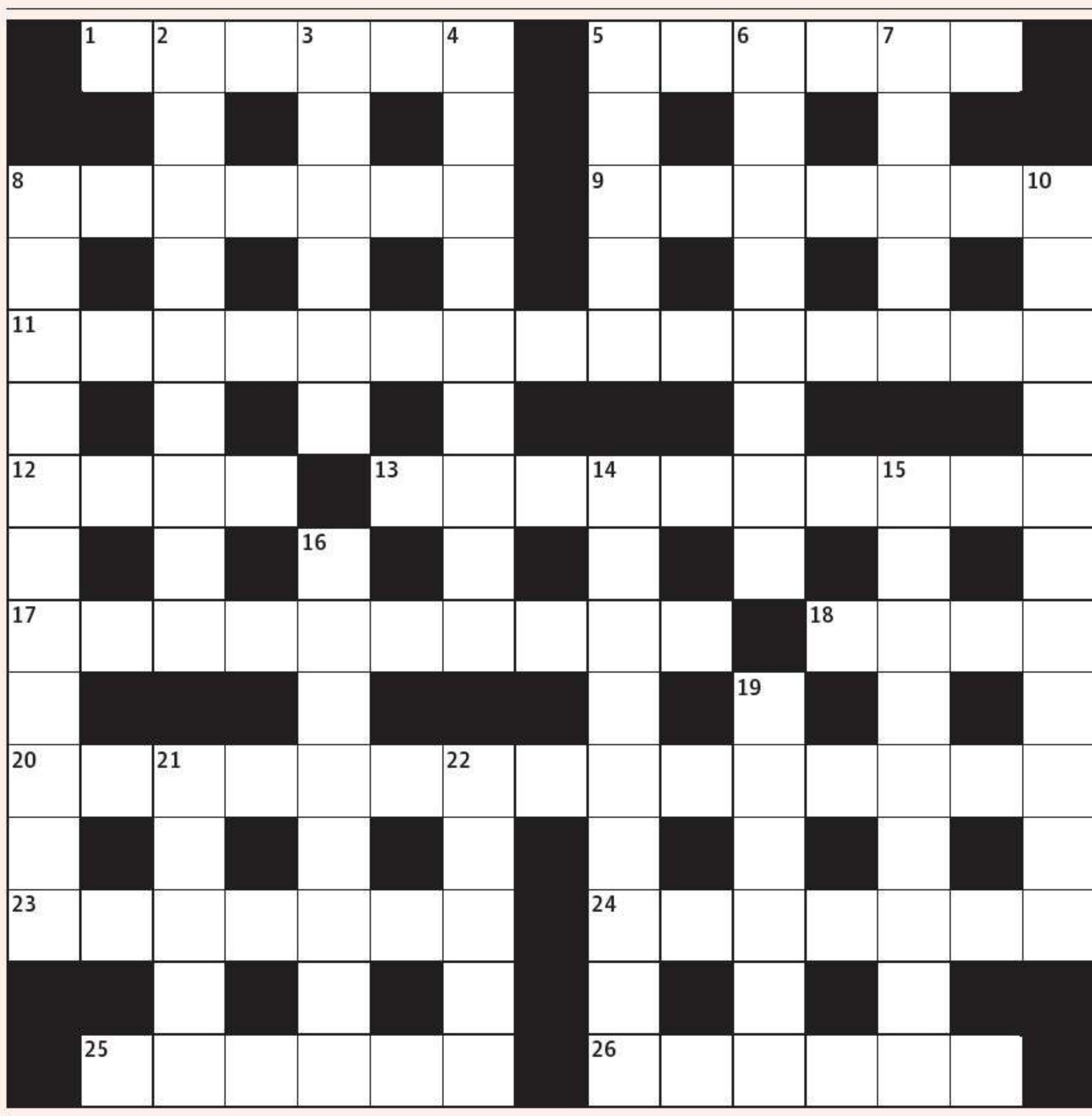
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A̸ B C D E F G H I J K L M N̸ O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
											N	A
14	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,480 set by Picaroon



Across

1 A look maintained by Starmer, with British sangfroid (6)
5 Best ever performance from leftist full of goodness (6)
8 Son remains in Cambridge University to succeed (5,2)
9 Computer file appended to mail for researcher (7)
11 Dope and beer left in building for event involving parties (7,8)
12 See 18
13 Government naturally welcomes learner drivers here (4,6)
17 Discouraging inaccurate activity on 13 (3-7)
18/12 Check revenue, gutted by tax (8)
20 Hammered pale worker's failed balancing act (9,6)
23 Articles from Germany and the UK, say, about craze (7)
24 Double whiskey brought in to Jacob's dwelling? (7)
25 Farage is hanging around charming companion (6)
26 Helen's lover speaking drunkenly in priest's district (6)

Down

2 Actor in a suit with no pattern turning up fine suit (9)
3 Parents mustn't have married different people (6)
4 During binge, sober stars pusillanimously withdraw (6,3)
5 Drive back from Carlisle, perhaps heading north (5)
6 Singer Johnny Rotten's no. 1 covered by one of The Police - a cultivated product (4,4)
7 Bones possibly set, with a different bit at the end? (5)
8 TV magnate with fraudulent investing scoffed, given a sweetener (5-6)
10 Presumed crook judge ticked off loses head (11)
14 Better to keep good list in a part of the index? (9)
15 Queen upset king breaks often shaky, special bonds (4,5)
16 Regularly shout 'cheats' where politicians speechify (8)
19 Figure holding Virginia up is Grace's partner (6)
21 Current prince deprived of electronic stuff (5)
22 Endless test about case of police work at the Met (5)



Thursday 05/09/24

Life & Arts

Adrian Chiles
I've found the world's nicest drivers!
page 3



How we survive
Kidnapped by pirates, rescued by Navy Seals
page 4

Adrian Chiles



These Youth Sports Games are not just a joy, they're a miracle

Even though I didn't know Graham Norton, I ended up playing simultaneous chess alongside Nemanja Vidić. I should explain. A couple of brothers from the Croatian city of Split came to see me in London, hoping I could put them in touch with Graham Norton, which I couldn't because I don't really know him. The brothers, Zdravko and Slaven Marić, told me about a sports tournament they organised for kids from countries that were once part of Yugoslavia. What, really? Kids from Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, all coming together in Split to play and compete together? Apparently so. And Norton came into it because in Croatia he's a big star. Everyone loves his show, subtitles and all. So they wanted him to come to Split to be a guest of honour at their Youth Sports Games.

At short notice I was unable to make their wish come true, but they didn't seem to hold it against me, as they insisted I come to Split for the finals of these Youth Sports Games. This I did, and I was completely blown away. It wasn't that I hadn't taken them at their word, or disbelieved them when they shared the list of sporting legends who had lent their support, but nothing prepared me for the magnificence of the enterprise when I saw it with my own eyes last month.



Aleksandar Kolarov (right) on the field at the games

Here for a start, taking lead roles in the event, were the Serbian football legends Nemanja Vidić and Aleksandar Kolarov. Both winners of multiple Premier League titles, with Manchester United and Manchester City respectively. And both with frankly terrifying dispositions on the field of play. United fans had the following chant for Nemanja: "He comes from Serb-ee-ya; he's going to murder ya." As I first clapped eyes on him face to face, even in the heat of high summer on the Adriatic, a chill went down my spine. But a more charming and intelligent man you'd go a long way to meet. And the same was true of Aleksandar, who, along with the former Croatian international Šime Vrsaljko, was introduced as a new ambassador for the organisation.

The scale of the thing is extraordinary. Well over 300,000 kids take part in heats around the four countries, and now more than 800 of them, from Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were in Split for the finals – running, throwing, catching and generally jumping for joy. The miracle of it – and there's no delicate way of putting this – is that many of their parents' generation were at war with each other. To see these children now, at competitive play, felt like being in a decidedly unrealistic, overly sentimental film. All too good to be true. Except it wasn't.

In the simultaneous chess match, against a grandmaster called Aleksandra Dimitrijević, Nemanja and I were each paired with young Slovenes. My lad, Val Vodnik, bless him, patiently explained his every move to me, and every move Ms Dimitrijević might make in response, and every move he might then make in turn. Every now and then, Nemanja and I exchanged a glance which said: no, I haven't really got a clue what's going on either.

In the evening, we moved on to a four-nation dodgeball contest, with girls and boys, men and women on each team. Thankfully, my participation wasn't required, so I looked on in considerable delight as Aleksandar Kolarov competed alongside Serbian nippers a quarter his size. No less entertaining was the sight of EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, a longtime supporter, mercilessly targeted by tots of all nations who had worked out that he, not being an athlete, was least able to dodge the balls slung at him, poor chap.

I don't know what Graham Norton is up to next August, but I'll be stopping at nothing to get him there. And I'll be sure they promise not to make him play dodgeball, for his own safety.

One flash of the lights and I'm a happy driver

I met a middle-aged American couple who had been driving around the UK. Although they had enjoyed the experience, they had a question for me: why are all your drivers so angry? They're always flashing their lights at us, they said. I explained that unless this was because someone had felt the Americans had no business in the fast lane of a motorway, they had got it all wrong – we generally flash our lights at people to let them in. Let us in, they echoed in wonder. Yes, you know, let you in, as in: after you, sir; or, please, madam, drive on. Right, they said, doubtfully.

I think the British may be the world's most accommodating, considerate – or least inconsiderate – drivers. Obviously, I've not driven everywhere, but I have been behind the wheel around most of Europe and a little on nearly every other continent. In my experience, we are the best at letting others in from slip roads, allowing fellow motorway drivers to change lanes or join from a junction, making way on single-track roads and so on. All facilitated with a wave of a hand or a flash of the lights and similar in return, by way of acknowledgment.

Admittedly, I am an enthusiast for this kind of thing. Pitiably anxious to be liked, I'll let anyone slip in front of me in return for a bit of love. Such is my generosity that my passengers have been known to despair of ever getting where we're going thanks to my need to win friends along the way.

I try to spread this love when I'm abroad, but this has been a hard road travelled. Nobody lets you in; nobody thanks you for letting them in. In Croatia last month, as I desperately sought acknowledgment, my generosity got ever more extreme. No driver who wanted to move into my path was denied; all were waved at or flashed in. And nothing. Not a flicker of gratitude.

I finally gave up after coming to a complete halt to allow a woman to nose out of an awkward spot. She looked at me at first as if I had lost my mind and then, as she sped away, she shot me a glance of what I can only describe as withering contempt. Enough, I decided. No more Mr Nice Guy – until I'm back in Blighty, being every motorist's best mate.

Pass notes



№ 4,743

Crime

Age: As old as humanity.

Appearance: Really easy to solve.

What? Crime's a piece of cake, isn't it? Anyone could solve it.

Actually, crime is famously difficult to solve. Dozens of murders go unsolved every year in the UK. Well, they'd better get me on the job, then, hadn't they?

Why? Are you a qualified forensic scientist? Almost. I watch a lot of true crime shows on the telly.

Oh no. I'm really good at them, too. I solved American Nightmare. I solved Worst Roommate Ever. I solved The Devil Next Door, The Night Stalker and American Manhunt: The Boston Marathon Bombing.

When you say you solved them … I mean I watched them all the way to the end. But you know what? I took something important from each of them, and now I'm pretty sure that I could solve a murder.

What a uniquely odd person you are. Oi, less of the unique. A new study shows that a third of Britons are just like me. We are all convinced, illogically, that we could solve a murder case. What's more, 18% of us think we could find a missing person, 17% think we could solve a fraud case and 13% think we'd be really good at cracking cybercrime.

But you're not police officers. We don't need to be! We live in a golden age of true crime content, with shows, podcasts and books retelling horrific crimes in the most grisly way possible, satisfying our desire to distil the worst moments of someone's life into a gulp of disposable entertainment.

But you know you're only watching an edited retelling that condenses the cases, usually omitting years and years of tedious, backbreaking investigation, right? Nah, I could solve a murder, easy.

Do you have any facts to back you up? Well, the study was commissioned by TV channel True Crime for the launch of its new show Killers: Caught on Camera, and presenter Dr Julia Shaw has commented on the results.

What did she say? She said: "Couch sleuthing is great but remember, those of us who make true crime documentaries whittle down months or years of police work into less than an hour. Don't underestimate the tedious work involved in actual crime-solving – all the dead ends, inconclusive evidence, paperwork, the waiting for search warrants, the cases that remain unsolved."

So what's the lesson here? Is it that I'm better at solving crimes than Dr Julia Shaw?

You're an idiot. Spoken like a true murderer.

Do say: "Solving crimes is harder than it looks on TV."

Don't say: "I'll stick to amateur surgery, then."

COVER: GUARDIAN DESIGN

'They'd ask me: do you want to die today?'



In 2011, aid worker Jessica Buchanan was kidnapped by pirates in the Somaliland desert. It was more than three months before she was freed by US Navy Seals – in the nick of time. By **Anna Moore**

In the first moments of her kidnapping, Jessica Buchanan's brain seized up, her mind went blank – but her body knew. Her experience of terror was physical. She struggled to breathe. She somehow turned icy cold, while at the same time she felt roasted alive.

"I had this very basic rumination: 'This is so bad, this is so bad,' running through my head and I couldn't move past it," she says. "I'd been given some rudimentary training through my work, but there's no course, no book, no movie that's going to prepare you for something like this, because you never in a million years think it will happen to you. It doesn't matter if you're in Somalia, LA or London, we always think we're the exception – that's how human beings survive. And then suddenly it hits like a bat to the middle of your forehead that you're not the exception, you're in the middle of it and completely powerless. I don't think I'd recognised that mentally yet – but my body recognised it."

This happened in October 2011, when Buchanan, an American from rural Ohio, was 32 and living in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, with her Swedish husband, Erik Landemalm. Both worked for NGOs. Buchanan was a regional educational adviser, producing materials to teach children how to avoid landmines and war munitions. She loved her life. "From a creative perspective, Africa is a feast for the eyes. There's always something to look at, something new to experience," she says. "I appreciated the simplicity, too. People would suffer, but were also happy, and I craved that. I felt like my work meant something. It's debatable whether aid workers are helping or not, but at the time I was super-naive. I felt maybe I was doing some good."

When she was kidnapped, she was 480 miles away from Hargeisa, attending staff training in the south of Somalia. The field office was located in an unstable region where territories were marked by invisible borders, controlled by warring clans and the Islamist group al-Shabaab. It was also 500 metres from a known pirate den – and Somali pirates were progressing from seizing ships to seizing people on land. Buchanan didn't know this, but she did know the region was dangerous and hadn't wanted to attend the training. She had voiced her concerns and cancelled it three times already.

On the day she attended, she was travelling in a 4x4 with a Danish colleague, 60-year-old Poul Hagen Thisted, when a vehicle roared alongside, splattering the windows with mud and forcing them to a halt. There was shouting, doors were pulled open, armed men jumped into the car and commanded the driver to drive. As they sped off, the man seated beside Buchanan put an AK-47 to her head.

She tried to make sense of it. A carjacking or armed robbery was her best hope. "The man sitting behind me was going through my bag, my wallet, pulling everything out, looking at it and throwing it behind him," she says. "You know circus music? I could almost hear that while I was watching him. He was high on khat [the flowering plant chewed for its stimulating effect] – he had the rolling eyes, the stained teeth and he was mumbling and laughing; giddy, erratic.

"At some point, the guy next to me wanted Poul's ballpoint pen and Poul refused to give it to him. There was this standoff – a gun right in Poul's face – and when he handed the pen over, the guy took it apart bit by bit, then stared at us and threw every part out the window. That's when I thought: 'Oh my God, I'm going to die.'"

They drove for hours, sometimes stopping to change vehicles or drivers. The kidnappers changed, too. Different men jumped in, ammunition slung over their shoulders, armed with grenades and machine guns that were so long they had to hang them out of the windows. By now, Buchanan could hope only that this was a pirate kidnapping for ransom, not an ideological one that would culminate in a public execution.

In the dead of night, they finally stopped in scrub desert. Buchanan and Thisted were ordered to walk into the wilderness. She believed they were marching to their deaths. "I wanted my last moments to be dignified, not desperate," she says. "It felt important, even though there was nobody that loved me to see it." Buchanan's mother had died a year earlier and that was where she found comfort. "I felt her so near – it was something to tether myself to," she says. "I kept thinking about her last moments, which I hadn't been there to witness. Did she feel like I did now? I was thinking: 'Now, I get to be with my mom.' Your brain is all over the place, looking for some silver lining."

Finally, they were ordered to kneel with their backs to the men. "Then you're waiting," she says. "Is this going to hurt?" Instead, one of them shouted: "Sleep!" and pushed them to the ground. That one-word order was their reprieve. "My body just took over and I passed out," she says. "I think I actually slept. Then I woke a couple of hours later and thought: 'Oh … I'm in hell.'"

The first nugget that Buchanan salvaged from her "hostile environmental awareness training" gave her some hope. "From the back of my brain, I remembered being told that if you survive the first 24 hours, your odds surge upwards," she says. "Who knows if that's true, but it's what I held on to."

Although Thisted and Buchanan were barely allowed to talk to each other, they sometimes managed to do so. In those early days, they devised the bare bones of a strategy, agreeing to collect information. "Trying to notice and understand, and memorise details, makes you feel you're doing something to move forward when you're completely powerless," she says. For example, by requesting to make a phone call (which they knew would be denied), they could





'I was naive, immature' … Buchanan in Somaliland in 2009

at least see the chain of command and learn who held power (there were 26 men, teenagers and child soldiers guarding them in shifts). Hearing the leader referred to as "chairman" was good news, indicating this was a secular operation. Thisted and Buchanan also agreed on a ground rule to guide their thinking. They could acknowledge fear and loneliness, boredom and frustration, but never despair. "I think we realised that if we allowed ourselves despair, we were as good as dead."

It was five days before their captors organised a "proof of life" call to their NGO and began negotiating a ransom. Their demands, starting at $45m (£34m), were wildly unrealistic. "I'm not a ship," says Buchanan.

Days melted into weeks, then months. They were constantly on the move by car, always camping in the open air. "In the daytime, you're hot and sweating and gross; at night, you're cold – there's nothing blocking the wind. Every morning, you wake up drenched – and you're always, always covered in dust."

As the only woman, Buchanan was on high alert – 13 years later, she still sleeps with her arms crossed over her chest as a kind of protection. When asked about her family, she invented a son, giving him the name of her dog, knowing that mothers hold a higher status in Somali culture and that she would therefore be less disposable than a childless aid worker.

"You have to read the room," she says. "And I got very good at that." Her captors clearly despised her when she showed emotion, cried or pleaded – from a woman, it was seen as a dishonest attempt at manipulation. The response was an instant knock to the ground and a gun in her face. ("Do you want to die today?") Instead, she did all she could to foster calm. "I knew which men felt safer, which to avoid, which ones were evil."

One, Jabreel, who was there as an interpreter, would lie beside her at night, touching her, stroking her. Buchanan had to hold him off without angering him. ("No, Jabreel, I'm married.") "I don't know how I wasn't raped," she says. "I had a very clear awareness that it was coming and considered myself lucky every time I managed to avoid it." Most of the kidnappers were there for a small salary and a daily khat delivery. The fact that impotence is a common side-effect of the plant may well have given her a layer of protection.

Practicalities also provided a distraction: finding private places to try to wash, tearing strips from her scarf for sanitary protection. As time passed, the men allowed Buchanan to cook. "Collecting wood for the fire, cooking rice, making bread was kind of empowering. I'd learned a new skill. I remember thinking: 'If I get out of here, I can't wait to show my husband how I can bake bread in the sand!' It gave me some sort of autonomy." For a while, to pass the time, Buchanan made an English vocabulary game using strips of cardboard. "Some of the men got really proud of themselves, learning English words – they were all bored," she says. That game stopped after an order from one of the leaders.

Every night, Buchanan imagined herself away. "I had a very vivid visualisation before I went to sleep," she says. "I spent hours in my mind, in my kitchen, making something like a pasta sauce, drinking red wine. I'd walk through our apartment, straighten up the couch cushions and feel how cool the tiles were. We had this really beautiful ornate bed and every night I'd get in and Erik would be there – and there was always a baby boy between us.

"Until then, I had no idea how powerful my mind was, how in control of my thoughts I could be," she continues. "I'm midwestern, glass half-empty; I complained a lot. This changed me fundamentally, because I was so dependent on finding something good to hold on to."

By January, though, that was increasingly hard to do. The absence of sanitation and limited water supply brought on a urinary tract infection that spread to Buchanan's kidneys and she spent much of her time curled up in pain. Ransom negotiations had stalled; their captors were losing patience and constantly threatening to sell them on ("We get $5m for you from al-Shabaab").

What Buchanan had never imagined was that the FBI knew all this, having gathered a wealth of information through local intelligence, as well as drones. The bureau knew their precise location, how many men were involved and what weapons they held. It knew that Buchanan's infection, compounded by her weakened state and the lack of medication for a thyroid condition, put her life in imminent danger. The shift from piracy at sea to the kidnapping of a non-political, non-religious aid worker represented a new level of threat. President Obama ordered her rescue. On the night of 25 January 2012, after Buchanan and Thisted had been in captivity for 93 days, 24 US Navy Seals parachuted close to the camp.

For Buchanan, the shootout felt like Armageddon. "I thought I was being kidnapped by another group and I didn't have the strength for it," she says. "It didn't occur to me that rescues took place for people who weren't military. I'm still unpacking that today and it's really humbling to think the US government put that in motion. When one of the men started talking to me and said my name, I was overwhelmed by shock. All I could say was: 'You're American?' It just didn't compute."

The nine kidnappers on guard that night were killed and Buchanan and Thisted were rushed to a helicopter. "It wasn't until we landed in the military base in Djibouti and got into a minivan that it began to sink in," says Buchanan. "I remember putting my head on Poul's shoulder and starting to weep. I just said: 'We survived.'"



Barack Obama informing Buchanan's father of her rescue

> **Nothing is going to prepare you. You never in a million years think it will happen to you**

The aftermath, what Buchanan calls "surviving survival", has been no less challenging. "Everyone wants to hear about the event, but it's the day in, day out of living that's the real hard work," she says. Buchanan's son, August, was born just over nine months after her release. ("It had been a very happy reunion," she says. "That visualisation was really powerful!") Although the family initially remained in Africa, Buchanan struggled. "I was having panic attacks, convinced I was being watched and that someone was going to kidnap my baby." They now live in the US, near Washington DC, where Landemalm works for an international organisation and Buchanan runs a small publishing company specialising in women's memoirs. They have two children, 11 and nine.

She still has her triggers. The worst is car travel. "We spent so much time in cars, with music blaring, men shouting, chaos, potholes, guns at my head, explosives in the back," she says. "If I'm in the car now with any noise, it's hard. I've had panic attacks and had to pull over. I drive in complete silence like a little old lady." Last summer, on holiday at a ranch in Montana, the dust and sand in the sheets caused her to wake in the night, crying hysterically. "Usually, though, I can manage pretty well. I've been through a lot of therapy."

Only now does Buchanan see something to take from those days in the desert. "It's taken me a really long time to get to a place where I can say it – and I wouldn't want to do it again – but I know who I am now," she says. "When it happened, I was naive, immature – I had some good qualities, too! – but I was too willing to let people make decisions for me. I've learned to trust my instincts, to trust myself. I learned that I'm really resourceful and innovative and that I can take responsibility for my life now. I like to think I met myself out there."

PHOTOGRAPHS: GREG KAHN/THE GUARDIAN AT ALX COMMUNITY; COURTESY OF JESSICA BUCHANAN; PETE SOUZA/ THE WHITE HOUSE

So much hatred ...

Twitter, or X, has been host to many of the most interesting conversations **Zoe Williams** has ever had. But its descent into a far-right abyss has been dramatic



I considered leaving Twitter as soon as Elon Musk acquired it in 2022, just not wanting to be part of a community that could be bought, least of all by a man like him - the obnoxious "long hours at a high intensity" bullying of his staff began immediately. But I've had some of the most interesting conversations of my life on there, both randomly, ambling about, and solicited, for stories: "Anyone got catastrophically lonely during Covid?"; "Anyone hooked up with their secondary school boy/girlfriend?" We used to call it the place where you told the truth to strangers (Facebook was where you lied to your friends), and that wide-openness was reciprocal and gorgeous.

It got more unpleasant after the blue-tick fiasco: identity verification became something you could buy, which destroyed the trust quotient. So I joined the rival platform Mastodon, but fast realised that I would never get 70,000 followers on there like I had on Twitter. It wasn't that I wanted the attention *per se*, just that my gang wasn't varied or noisy enough. There's something eerie and a bit depressing about a social media feed that doesn't refresh often enough, like walking into a shopping mall where half the shops have closed down and the rest are all selling the same thing.

In 2023, the network now known as X began sharing ad revenues with its "premium" users, and I joined Threads (which is owned by Meta), but all I ever see on it is strangers confessing to boring misdemeanours. I remained on X, where everything got darker. People get paid, indirectly through advertising, for engagement. Even that is a bit murky, since it's described as "revenue sharing", but you don't get to see which ads' revenues were shared with you, so can't measure revenue-per-impression. Is X sharing it 50/50? Or 10/90? Are they actually paying you to generate hatred?

"What we've seen," says Ed Saperia, dean of the London College of Political Technology, "is controversial content drives engagement. Extreme content drives engagement." Creating toxic content became a viable livelihood, which my 16-year-old, on football X, noticed way before I did: people saying patently wrong things for hate-clicks. You might get a couple of thousand likes for noticing that David Cameron looks like Catherine the Great, but that's nothing like the engagement you'll get for attacking trans people, say. Those high-attention tweets go straight to the top of the For You feed, driven by a "black box algorithm designed to keep you scrolling", as Rose Wang, COO of another rival, Bluesky, puts it, but the user experience is screeds of repetition on topics tailored to annoy you.

As a result of these changes, says Joe Mulhall, head of research at Hope Not Hate, "the platform has been flooded by individuals who were previously de-platformed, ranging from extreme niche accounts to figures like Tommy Robinson and Andrew Tate". We saw the real-life effects of this when misinformation over the identity, ethnicity and faith of the killer of three young girls in Southport incited explicitly racist unrest across the UK this August, such as hasn't been seen since the 70s. X, Mulhall says, "was a central hub not only for creating the climate for the riots, but also the organisation and distribution of content that led to riots".

After the race riots in August it transpired that one man, "keyboard warrior" Wayne O'Rourke, convicted for inciting racial hatred on social media, was earning £1,400 a month from his activities on X. The blowhard Laurence Fox declared last month that he earns a similar amount from posting on X. O'Rourke had 90,000 followers; Tommy Robinson has more than a million, and it's likely that he's making far more.

Governments, meanwhile, have no reliable redress, even when, as Mulhall puts it, "decisions made on the west coast of America are demonstrably affecting our communities". In April, Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, sought suspensions of fewer than 100 X accounts, for hate speech

and fake news – mainly supporters of his predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, disputing the legitimacy of his defeat. X refused and declined to represent itself in court. On Monday, the Brazilian supreme court unanimously upheld a ban on the entire platform, arguing that it "considered itself above the rule of law". It's extraordinary that Musk didn't do more to avoid that, from a business perspective, but it may be that there are things he values more than money, such as immunity from governmental or democratic constraint.

So is it moral to remain on a platform that does so much to bring the politics of division and hatred off the keyboard and into real life? Is X any worse than Facebook, or TikTok, or YouTube? And is it worse on purpose, which is to say: are we watching the unfolding of a Musk masterplan?

"It's not the first time we've had extremist content online," says Saperia. "There are lots of bad platforms, lots of bad things happen on them." X's problem may not be that its regulations are bad, but that its enforcement is bad, he points out. But it is not alone in that. "Have you looked at the UK court system lately? There are cases being heard from five years ago. If you don't have laws, you don't have a society."

X might be both spur and muster point for civil unrest, from the January 6 US Capitol attack to Southport and beyond, but we should also keep in mind, Saperia says, that "politics is moving to the right, not just because of the media environment, but for complex economic reasons: the middle-class west is getting poorer". Donald Trump may have shocked the US legacy media by speaking directly to voters with coarse, increasingly unhinged messaging, but if we think a contented population, secure in a prosperous future, would have embraced his authoritarian lurch, we're dreaming. Rage is out there, whether social media bankrolls it or not, and "all the mainstream platforms were generally failing on hate speech", Mulhall says. "They didn't want this content, but they were struggling to deal with it. Then they would step up a bit after a Charlottesville [the white supremacist rally in 2017] or Capitol Hill."

Nevertheless, Hope Not Hate separates far-right online activism into three strains: mainstream platforms – X, Instagram, Facebook – which aren't into fascism but struggle to snuff it out and probably don't invest enough in moderation and regulation; co-opted platforms, such as Discord and Telegram, which start off as chat sites or messaging services and, maybe due to their superior privacy or encryption, become the favourite chat apps of the far right; and bespoke platforms, such as Rumble (part-funded by the fundamentalist libertarian and billionaire Peter Thiel), Gab (which became a nidus of primarily antisemitic hatred after the perpetrator of the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting posted his manifesto there) and Parler, which Kanye West bought in 2022, after he had been banned from Instagram and Twitter for antisemitism.

"Twitter has broken the mould," Mulhall says. "It's ostensibly a mainstream platform that now has bespoke moderation policies. Elon Musk is himself inculcated with radical-right politics. So it's behaving much more like a bespoke platform, created by the far right. This marks it out significantly from any other platform. And it's extremely toxic, an order of magnitude worse, not least because, while it still has terms of service, they're not necessarily implementing them."

Musk's commitment to free speech is jaw-droppingly unconvincing: he used it to reject Lula's demands in Brazil, yet readily acceded to Narendra Modi's demands in India and suspended hundreds of accounts linked to farmers' protests there in February. "Things like free speech are instruments to Musk, rather than principles," Mulhall says. "He's a tech utopian with no attachment to democracy."

Global civil society, though, finds it incredibly difficult to reject the free speech argument out of hand, because the alternative is so dark: that a number of billionaires – not just Musk but also Thiel with Rumble, Parler's original backer, Rebekah Mercer (daughter of Robert Mercer, funder of Breitbart), and, indirectly, billionaire sovereign actors such as Putin – are successfully changing society, destroying the

> **Twitter has broken the mould. It's extremely toxic, an order of magnitude worse**



Andrew (left) and Tristan Tate in court in Bucharest

trust we have in each other and in institutions. It's much more comfortable to think they're doing that by accident, because they just love "free speech", than that they're doing that on purpose. "Part of understanding the neo-reactionary and 'dark enlightenment' movements is that

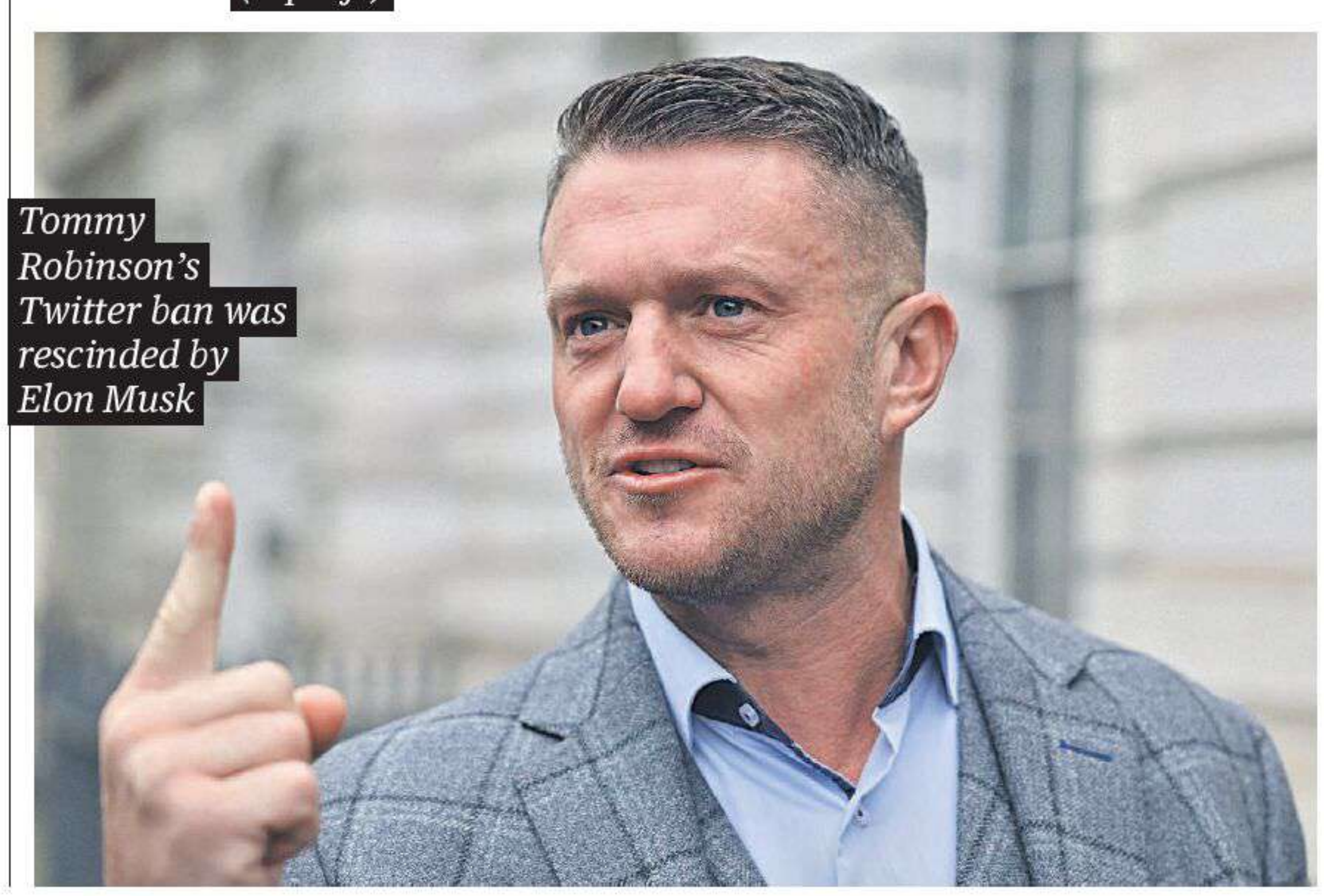


A Donald Trump Truth Social post featuring Musk (top left)

these individuals don't have any interest in the continuation of the status quo," Mulhall says.

"In some jurisdictions," Saperia says, "what sovereigns do and what billionaires do are quite related." You can see that in Russia where, Mulhall says, "Putin is happy to use the state to manipulate social media to create polarisation – that's been pretty much proved". But where tech and politics aren't aligned, politics doesn't tend to come out on top. Governments look pretty powerless in the face of these massive tech companies. "Race hatred and attempted murder is incubated on these platforms," Mulhall says, "and people don't even think it's possible to get Musk in front of parliament."

In Paris, the founder of Telegram, Pavel Durov, is being formally investigated for his app's alleged role in organised crime, and Musk has been named in a cyberbullying lawsuit brought by the gold medallist Imane Khelif. The boxer, who was born female and has never identified as either trans or intersex, was subjected to libellous claims about her gender by numerous public figures – British politicians, JK Rowling, Donald Trump – all on X. Andrew Tate, meanwhile, may have been charged by the Romanian authorities with human trafficking and rape, but his online misogynist fantasies of women as a slave caste, which have immense global reach, have attracted no censure greater than de-platforming, by YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook – while the impact of these bans was lessened, even undone, by his freedom to operate on X. The EU has been more successful than the US in at least conceiving of social media giants as having the same corporate responsibility as, say, a pharmaceutical or oil company, but regulation still races to catch up with the changing reality, in which divisions are migrating faster than ever from the virtual to the real world.



Tommy Robinson's Twitter ban was rescinded by Elon Musk

But we don't need a government to step in and tell us to stop using X; we could do that on our own. Brazilians, Twitterless, have been migrating to Bluesky, which was set up in 2019 by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey. Bluesky's Wang described on Monday "a wild ride even in the last four days. As of this morning, we've had nearer 2 million new users." If we all did that (I've done that!), would it obliterate X's power? Or would there just be a bifurcation, a Good Place and a Bad Place?

Bluesky serves a similar purpose to X, but is designed completely differently, as Wang describes: "No single entity has control over the platform, all the code is open-sourced, anyone can copy and paste our entire code. We can't own your data; you can take it wherever you want. We have to win your usership through our performance or else you will leave. That's much more like how search engines work. If you enshittify the search engine by placing ads everywhere, people will go to a different search engine."

The main hurdle has been that people migrate in packs and until recently weren't migrating fast enough. If they do, and Saperia is right, Bluesky or Threads (which has 175 million active monthly users) will ultimately supplant X. Will it be the same? It can't be – the free-for-all of the open web, from which Twitter created its famous "town square" experience (anyone could chat, and the Coastguard Agency and CNN were also right there) has been replaced by a social media idea Saperia calls the "dark forest" and Wang describes as "you find your people in small spaces, and work together to build an experience that you want – basic human building blocks of interaction".

Did Musk take a thing we all loved and smash it? Pretty much. But "a small group of people governing spaces for billions of people just doesn't work", Wang says. So, one way or another, someone was bound to.

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUARDIAN DESIGN; GETTY/REUTERS; AFP; EPA; TRUTH SOCIAL/@REALDONALDTRUMP

'I had no career – I had a wild slalom at way too high a speed'



Eruption adventures ... Herzog in his 2016 film Into the Inferno

He has made feverish films about crazed obsessives – but one idea proved too wild. Werner Herzog tells **Ryan Gilbey** why Mexico, featuring acting frogs and fleets of ships on fire, is now being published as a paperback

Werner Herzog has two faces, both wearing the same expression of grave forbearance. To some, he is the formidable adventurer-auteur whose cinematic odysseys, such as Fitzcarraldo and Aguirre, the Wrath of God, doubled as life-imperilling expeditions for cast and crew. Millions of others know him only from his work in front of the camera, as a villain in Jack Reacher or as the mysterious Client in the Star Wars spin-off The Mandalorian.

Herzog turns 82 today, but ask him how he feels about a career spanning more than six decades and he will protest. "I had no career," he says, squinting into his webcam from a book-lined office in his Los Angeles home. "I had a wild slalom at way too high a speed and temperature, with rocks and trees that I didn't collide with – and I didn't perish."

That's one way to put it. He has been around the block, to the ends of the earth, up the mountain and down the other side. In the case of Fitzcarraldo, about a crazed, single-minded genius who dreams of building an opera house in the middle of the Amazon, he did it all with a steamboat in tow. Many of Herzog's films concern crazed, single-minded geniuses. Self-portraits, some might say.

There is so much potential ground to cover with him that it is possible to feel overwhelmed even before he has greeted you in that solemn, emphatic but soothing voice. Yet he has covered this ground so often, whether in his 2022 memoir Every Man for Himself and God Against All or in thousands of interviews, that the stories are as familiar to us now as our own histories, if likely a good deal more dramatic: his childhood in wartime Munich with his Nazi parents; how he stabbed his brother during a squabble over a pet hamster, and nearly died in northern Africa of an acute parasitic disease; how he hypnotised the cast of his film Heart of Glass, or cooked and devoured his own footwear as part of a bet, an act captured in the short film Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe. "A grownup man should eat his shoes once in a while," he later reflected.

But it is literature rather than cinema that has occasioned our conversation today. "No one else writes like me," he says bluntly. "My writing will outlive all my films. I am certain as certain can be. Film-making is my voyage but writing is home."

He is about to publish Mexico, a screenplay he wrote in the 1990s about the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs. The costs of producing an epic with spectacular special effects, battle scenes, galleons and thousands of extras were prohibitively high back then. They remain so even in our era of CGI.

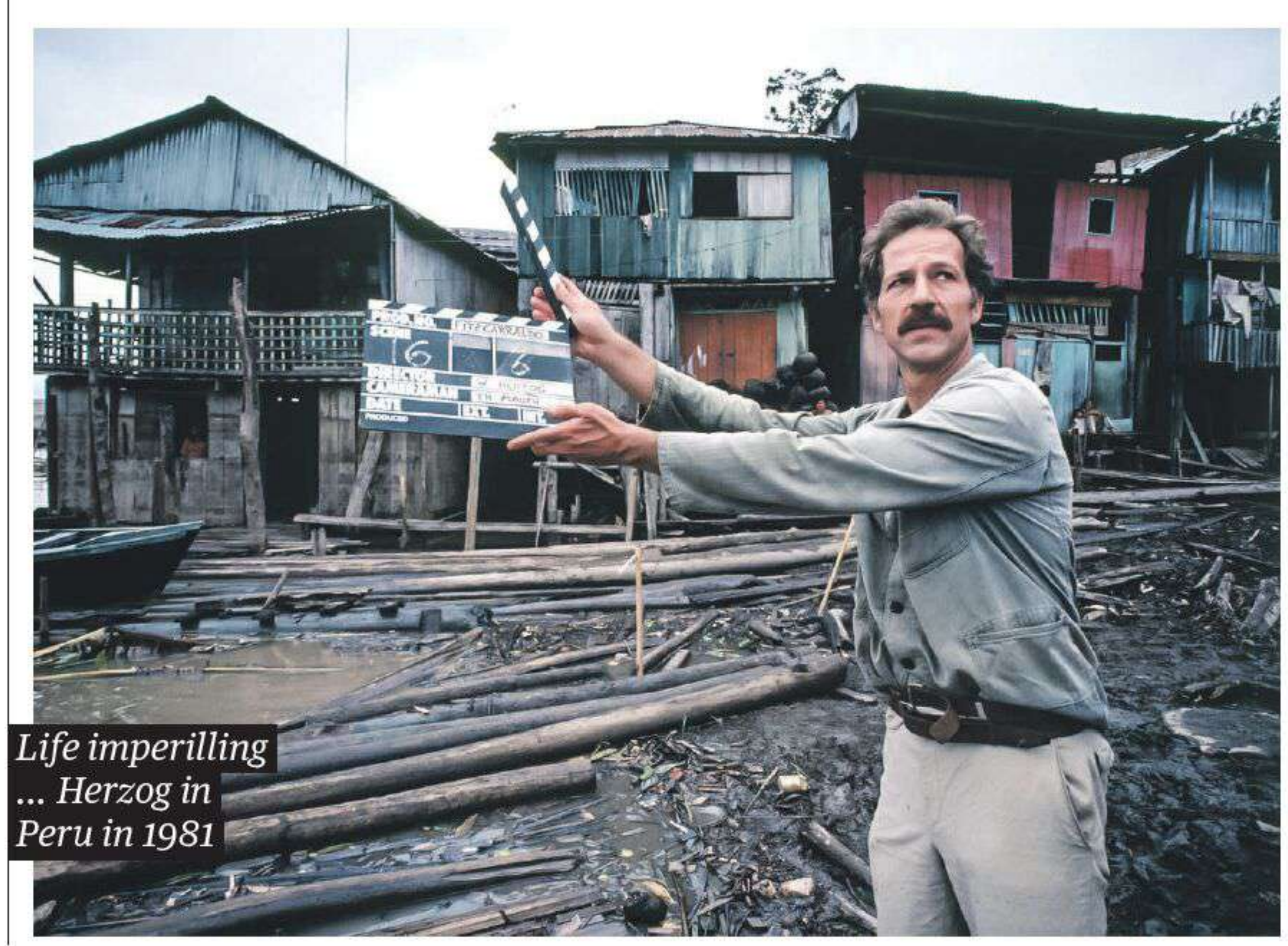
"To make a film like this, you have to be in the league of your last film earning $250m domestic in the US," he says. Those just aren't Herzog numbers, not even when his movies hit big. His doolally thriller Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans, starring Nicolas Cage as a drug-addled cop who hallucinates breakdancing ghosts and singing iguanas, took $10m worldwide. Grizzly Man, his documentary about the environmentalist Timothy Treadwell, who was killed by a bear, grossed just under half that.

Of course, James Cameron would have no trouble making Mexico. "He wouldn't even have to ask for the money," Herzog concedes. "And that's OK. I can live with that." As he writes in the foreword to the screenplay: "I have spent not one sleepless night over the fact that I could not realise this project."

Why did he want readers to know that? "Because normally people ask, 'Isn't it terrible that you could not make that film?' And my answer is: it happens. I made something like 20 films in the last 20 years. There's unfinished business out there, but so be it." He says it's impossible to know how close Mexico came to being a reality. "You cannot speak in yardage. Francis Ford Coppola wanted to do it with his company, American Zoetrope, but it never materialised." He also waves away any talk of potential casting ideas. "Your question points in the direction of a film, and I dislike it, because what we have here in front of us is literature. There is a text, and nothing else."

What a text, though. Screenplays can make for dry reading but Mexico fully evokes an entire civilisation, as well as the bonkers movie that might have been. Fleets of ships burn on the coast, and there are stage directions for frogs, goats and ocelots. When a bridge collapses under the weight of thousands of people, one character makes a gruesome escape across the carnage: "Incredibly, his very long lance clutched horizontally before him, Alvarado reaches the breach at top speed, *impales* the wriggling mass of bodies, and pole vaults himself to safety," writes Herzog.

The urgency puts one in mind of Aguirre, the Wrath of God, which followed 16th-century Spanish conquistadors searching for El Dorado but felt closer to documentary than period piece. "I write screenplays fast," he says. "I see a film happening before me as if you were in a screening room



Life imperilling ... Herzog in Peru in 1981

I wrote some of it on a bus with a drunk football team. The goalkeeper vomited over my typewriter

trying to note down everything while it's being projected." Aguirre was written that way, punched out in two days. "Some of it I wrote when I was on a bus on tour with my football team, and they were all drunk and chanting obscene songs. The goalkeeper vomited over my little typewriter that was on my knees. Two or three pages were beyond repair, so I threw them out of the window. I never remembered what was on them."

Mexico runs on that Herzogian immersion and immediacy. "As you see, it is written exactly from the perspective of the Aztecs. For them, these are aliens landing at their shores, descending from the clouds, and they ride on miraculous stags – that is, horses – and they create thunder and lightning from steel pipes, meaning muskets." It is not until page 91 that anyone even voices the suspicion that the invaders may not be gods after all.

This is roughly at the end of the second act, but don't let Herzog catch you saying so. He is unsparing in his contempt for terms like "backstory", "three-act structure" and "inciting incident", and holds in disdain the lucrative screenwriting industry that spawned them. "Utter, utter nonsense," he huffs. "Counterproductive. There's more to storytelling in cinema than fixed strategies and structures. This is why much of the film industry has become so formulaic and predictable."

He despises film schools too, and used to stage his own rough-and-tumble version in response: the Rogue Film School, a series of irregular workshops in outdoor locations. (The suggested reading list included Bernal Diaz del Castillo's The True History of the Conquest of New Spain.) He invited applications from budding film-makers who had "worked as bouncers in sex clubs or as wardens in a lunatic asylum", then taught them to pick locks and forge shooting permits.

Though Herzog abhors formula, his own dalliances with Hollywood seem to have filled him with delight. Playing a baddie opposite Tom Cruise in Jack Reacher was a breeze. "A villain is something that comes easily to me. When you look at Jack Reacher, I'm so frightening. My wife has friends in Paris who saw it. They called her and said, 'Lena, are you married to *that man*? You know, you're only one overnight flight away from us. We can give you shelter!' Hearing that, I knew I was good. Although, as my wife will testify, I am a fluffy husband."

He has certainly been fluffy company today. As we prepare to say our goodbyes, I wish him a happy birthday, which prompts a rueful smile. "I don't think of age in terms of years," he says. "I count it by films, 'Ah, that was the year I made Signs of Life'" – his 1968 debut feature about three German soldiers – "or 'That was when I did Into the Abyss'" – his 2011 documentary about American prison inmates on death row. "Sometimes I feel I've aged five or 10 years in a single week. Time is not linear for me, it's convulsive, so birthdays are meaningless."

Then he corrects himself. "Well, it does have *some* meaning, because I know I shall have a wonderful barbecue with friends." Will there be party games? A piñata? "No, no. There will only be two friends. Three maximum. We will rant and rave and there will be a good bottle of wine and the lamb chops will be sizzling." At least shoes aren't on the menu this time.

Mexico: The Aztec Account of the Conquest by Werner Herzog is published by Sticking Place Books, priced £20



Total immersion ... Klaus Kinski in Fitzcarraldo

PHOTOGRAPHS: PROFESSOR CLIVE OPPENHEIMER/PUBLICITY IMAGE; JEAN-LOUIS ATLAN/SYGMA/GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

Jonathan Scott

'I followed the hunt from a distance with my knee on the steering wheel – focusing manually while trying not to hit an anthill or go down a warthog burrow'



My wife Angie and I have spent much of our careers as photographers focusing on big cats in the Maasai Mara reserve in Kenya, but when each of us won Wildlife Photographer of the Year it was with different species. Angie's winner was of elephants looking at a heron. Mine was this, which was taken in 1987, before she and I met. Having lived for over a decade in Africa and published books about lions and leopards, I'd travelled down to the Serengeti to work on one about the great migration, keen to see what the wildebeest do during the wet season. I realised there was also a story to be told about the wild dogs that make dens on the southern plains at that time, when food is most plentiful, and they're raising their puppies.

It took me six years to get all the pictures for my book The Leopard's Tale – they are extremely difficult animals to photograph. So I loved the contrast of switching to the most social carnivore and pack-hunting of animals. I was at the den 24/7.

There were two shots I really wanted to capture. One was when the dogs were chasing their prey. For that, I would be driving at a distance, but parallel to the hunt if I could, one knee on the steering wheel, leaning out of the window with a 70-200mm zoom lens, trying not to hit an anthill or go down a warthog burrow. I was using film, and having to focus manually. I got that shot, and it was the runner-up the year this photograph won.

This was the other shot I'd wanted: that dramatic moment when the pack has chased down its prey. While some of the dogs caught the wildebeest by the tail and back legs, trying to anchor it, one would run around the front, leap up and grab the nose and upper lip. I knew exactly what the shot would look like – and bam, there it was. I took it towards the end of the day and would have loved a bit of backlight through the wildebeest's mane, but when I saw it at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition, blown up into a big print, it did look very dramatic.

I don't agree with people who say: "You're glorifying violence." The wild dog is doing what it has evolved to do. The beauty and wonder of the prey animals – the speed of the impala, the incredible fleetness and zigzagging of the Thomson's gazelle, the alertness, the sharp eyes, the horns – are due to the pressure of predation. It's life and death, because predators have to kill to survive. Hugo van Lawick and Jane Goodall perhaps put it best in the title of their book about hyenas, wild dogs and jackals: Innocent Killers.

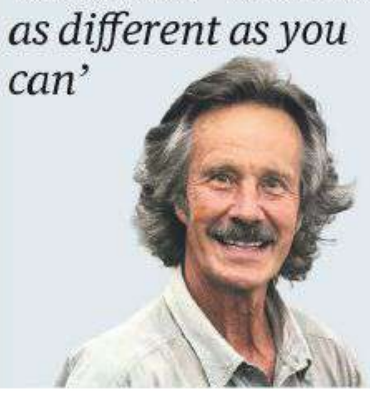
If you're as passionate about nature as I am, you get so immersed in the world of the wild creatures that you feel part of it. Your human persona almost vanishes and you are just present in that moment. There would be many times when the dogs wouldn't have food to take back to their puppies, and I was totally invested in what it takes to raise them, and how difficult it can be.

When the puppies start emerging from the den they can be killed by lions, or their food can be stolen by hyenas. Humans too were once out on those plains, competing for food with the large predators. There's a connection there, and an adrenaline rush when you see a cheetah sprint after prey. It's not that you want to see something die. But at the same time, you're fascinated.

Interview by Chris Broughton. 60 Years of Wildlife Photographer of the Year is available now in hardback from nhmshop.co.uk

The CV

Born: *1949, London*
Trained: *Zoology degree, Queen's University Belfast*
Influences: *Sir Peter Scott, Joseph Campbell, David Attenborough, the 1966 film Born Free*
High point: *'Marrying Angela atop the Siria Escarpment in the Maasai Mara, 1992'*
Low point: *'Failing the entrance exam to Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, aged eight. Fortunately I was given a second chance'*
Top tip: *'Only buy the equipment you really need, secondhand if possible. See what other photographers have achieved with subjects you want to work with – then be as different as you can'*





Evolution of a hero … Volodymyr Zelenskiy with his wife, Olena

Review The Zelensky Story, BBC Two

One day the voice of Paddington, the next the leader of Ukraine

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan



It's such an astonishing story that you wouldn't dare make it up. And yet someone already had, which is part of what makes the story so astonishing. From 2015 to 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, a popular comic film and TV actor, starred in Servant of the People – a political satire about an ordinary man suddenly made president of Ukraine, who gradually proves himself to be the incorruptible leader the country needed. In 2019, Zelenskiy began serving as president in real life; barely three years after that, he found himself president in a time of war, when Vladimir Putin did what he had long wanted to do and invaded the country.

The Zelensky Story, directed by Michael Waldman, is told in three hour-long parts filmed over several trips to Ukraine. It comprises interviews with Zelenskiy, his wife, Olena, and friends and colleagues, mixed with footage of his entertainment career and his life as a statesman, diplomat and war leader. The first episode covers Zelenskiy's rise to fame; the second his move into politics and Putin's invasion of Ukraine; and the third his experience as the head of a country convulsed by conflict.

In the background, always, is Putin's career and – not inadvertently – the difference between the two men. Only film can capture the blank-eyed soullessness of the Russian president and the ineffable sense of wrongness he carries with him; only film can capture the warmth, charm and humanity radiating from his Ukrainian counterpart, brimful of soul. It is hard not to let their intertwined fates take on mythic proportions: good versus evil, darkness versus light, Zelenskiy's love for his country and his people versus Putin's hate for anything but power.

In the first episode, we see Zelenskiy in happier times, with his friends and fellow players in a comedy troupe that moved swiftly up the ranks of Ukraine's televised comedy competition, KVN, leading to tours of Moscow and various former Soviet countries, gaining fans everywhere. He started his own production company, starred in successful films and, in what feels in this film like his last moment of peace, voiced the part of Paddington in the Ukrainian versions of the films.

Everyone interviewed who knew him at the time is clear that he was extremely talented but also extremely competitive and driven. This appetite for ever greater challenges led him to make the fateful move into politics, although he was clearly motivated by the need to purge Ukraine's political system of its corruption and its ties to Putin. But he blindsided his wife with his announcement on the 2018 New Year's Eve edition of KVN that he would be running for president. She found out at the same time as the rest of the country, through the TV screen – a supreme example of the principle that it is easier to apologise afterwards than ask for permission first. It is clear from Olena's expressions then and now that, even without the invasion, this is not the life she would have chosen.

Whatever we make of this move, it is hard to watch the next few years of Zelenskiy's life unfold without coming to the conclusion that you are watching the evolution of a hero: clear-sighted, intelligent, a master of the media – vital today – and a true believer in a cause greater than himself. The famous video of him and his parliament assuring Ukrainians that they were staying in Kyiv as the Russians advanced, filmed on his phone and sent directly into the world, will remain for ever remarkable. That he had the savvy to retain scriptwriters from his Servant of the People days to write his speeches, and to design them to move electorates when it became clear that world leaders were reluctant to help without pressure, is another kind of marvel.

Waldman has put together a detailed portrait of an extraordinary man at an extraordinary time in his country's history (and that of the world, if you think what a Putin victory would mean for western democracy), while unobtrusively filling in any gaps in geopolitical knowledge a viewer might have. This is a gift of a subject, but Waldman manages to sidestep hagiography while still acknowledging the astonishing nature of the man and his time. Zelenskiy is a study in how passion paired with performance skills is one of the greatest advantages a modern leader can have. Whether it is enough to drive back the Russian army, we will have to wait and see.

Mercury Prize 2024: Album of the Year

8pm, BBC Four



A sense of mounting disarray surrounds the music awards this year – expect a scaled-down event at Abbey Road studios (no sponsor has been forthcoming) and the usual sense of mild confusion about what exactly is being celebrated. The do is being filmed and broadcast live, with this year's leading contenders including Charli xcx (for the summer-defining Brat), Corinne Bailey Rae (for Black Rainbows) and Cat Burns (*above*, for Early Twenties). Annie Macmanus and Huw Stephens host.
Phil Harrison

Michael Mosley: Wonders of the Human Body
8pm, Channel 5
It is poignant to see the late Michael Mosley in his element in the last episode of this series. His knack of putting himself at the centre of health experiments shines bright as he explains what is going on inside the human body. This time, he swallows a "pill camera" to show his intestines.
Hannah Verdier

Don't Hate Your House With the Property Brothers
8pm, U&W
With fewer people moving house, this series gets people to fall in love with their homes. In the first show, property whiz twins Drew and Jonathan Scott help sweet-natured parents Herme and Angie transform their living space to accommodate their ageing family.
Nicole Vassell

Who Do You Think You Are?
9pm, BBC One
The former EastEnders actor, Strictly Come Dancing winner and deaf rights campaigner Rose Ayling-Ellis dives into her family history. She starts with her great-great-great grandmother – a Birmingham pub owner, whom the actor imagines was like Peggy Mitchell, the erstwhile landlady of the Old Vic. But what was her real story?
Hollie Richardson

Emma Willis: Delivering Babies
9pm, U&W
Willis is so relatable as she trains to be a maternity support worker that it's easy to forget she is a celebrity. After 18 months away from the hospital, she is straight into action, supporting a woman whose labours are speedy, and admits to feeling like "the most amateur person" in the operating theatre. **HV**

Couples Therapy
10pm, BBC Two
A throuple walk into Dr Orna Guralnik's therapy room to kick off the fourth season. Aryn joined Josh and Lorena's relationship six years in and the trio are navigating polyamory. Rex and Joey have been married for 10 months – despite Joey hiding the relationship from her mother for six years. **HR**

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Maximum Security (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Doctors (T) **2.30** Make It at Market (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Antiques Road Trip (T) **4.30** The Answer Run (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Celebrity MasterChef** (T) The four remaining contestants are set three tasks, including a pairs challenge.
9.0 **Who Do You Think You Are?** (T) Actor and deaf rights campaigner Rose Ayling-Ellis goes in search of her family history, investigating a rumour of Italian ancestry on her father's side.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **America's New Female Right** (T) (R) Layla Wright meets a new wave of female social-media influencers.
11.40 **Freddie Flintoff: Field of Dreams on Tour** (T) (R)
12.40 **The Hit List** (T) (R) **1.25** Weather for the Week Ahead (T) **1.30** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **7.15** Antiques Road Trip (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Head Hunters (T) (R) **1.45** Bridge of Lies (T) (R) **2.30** My Unique B&B (T) (R) **3.0** MasterChef: The Professionals (T) (R) **4.0** Home Away from Home (T) (R) **4.45** More Creatures Great and Small (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R)

7.0 **Athletics: Diamond League Zurich** (T) Coverage of the 12th and penultimate meeting of the season, the Weltklasse Zürich, held at Letzigrund in Switzerland.
9.0 **Inside the Factory** (T) (R) Gregg Wallace explores the Jelly Bean Factory in Dublin to reveal how it makes 10m sweets every day.

10.0 **Couples Therapy** (T)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Interview With the Vampire** (T) The coven stage a trial.
11.50 **Interview With the Vampire** (T) Louis plots revenge.
12.45 **Sign Zone** Celebrity MasterChef (T) (R) **1.15** Saving Lives in Cardiff (T) (R) **2.15** The Misinvestigations of Romesh Ranganathan (T) (R)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.30 **Love Your Garden** (T) (R) The team create a cleverly designed family garden that is fun for pre-school tots without being a primary-coloured plastic eyesore.
9.0 **The Tower** (T) Operation Perseus reaches its climax as Kieran prepares to catch Shakiel with automatic weapons. Last in the series.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **The Late Debate** (T)
11.15 **Olivia Attwood's Bad Boyfriends** (T) (R)
12.05 **Shop on TV** **3.0** Champions: Full Gallop (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** In for a Penny (T) (R) **5.30** Gino's Italian Family Adventure (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.10 Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **7.0** Frasier (T) (R) **8.0** Paralympics Paris Breakfast (T) **10.55** News (T) **11.0** Paralympics Paris 2024 (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Paralympics Paris 2024 (T)

9.30 **The Last Leg in Paris** (T) Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker present a comic review of Paralympic Games highlights from Paris, joined in this edition by comedians Jon Richardson and Fats Timbo.

10.30 **Paralympics Highlights** (T)
11.35 **Gogglebox** (T) (R)
12.30 **Night Coppers** (T) (R) **1.25** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Blackbird (2019) (T) Drama, starring Susan Sarandon. **4.0** Love It Or List It (T) (R) **4.25** Food Unwrapped (T) (R) **4.55** Frasier (T) (R) **5.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Framed for Murder (Jeff Hare, 2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Madrid With Michael Portillo (T)

8.0 **Michael Mosley: Wonders of the Human Body** (T) The best way to keep our brains young as we age. Last in the series.
9.0 **Cause of Death** (T) After a 63-year-old man is found dead with a severe wound to his hip and cuts and abrasions on his hands, Lancashire coroner's officers try to ascertain the cause of death.

10.0 **Cruel & Unusual: Terror in Suburbia** (T) (R)
11.55 **Accused: Guilty Or Innocent?** (T) A man shot by his wife.
12.50 **Entertainment News** (T) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Tyrant: The Rise of Adolf Hitler (T) (R) **3.50** The World's Greatest Bridges (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.05** Divine Designs (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great American Railroad Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo reaches Colorado.

8.0 **Mercury Prize 2024: Album of the Year** (T) Live coverage of the annual event to choose the album of the year from 12 shortlisted entries.
9.15 FILM **Porridge** (Dick Clement, 1979) (T) Cellmates Fletcher and Godber are forced into aiding an escape attempt. Comedy, starring Ronnie Barker.

10.45 FILM **Get Carter** (Mike Hodges, 1971) (T) A London racketeer returns to his native Newcastle. Thriller, starring Michael Caine.
12.35 **Michael Caine: Talking Pictures** (T) (R) **1.25** Raiders of the Lost Past With Janina Ramirez (T) (R) **2.25** Great American Railroad Journeys (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Planet Earth II **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** Dubai Hustle **9.30** Dubai Hustle **10.0** The TikTok Effect **11.0** Stacey Dooley in the USA **12.0** Back to Life **12.25** Back to Life **12.50** Starstruck **1.15** Top Gear **2.15** Zen Motoring **2.25** Eating With My Ex **2.55** America's New Female Right

U&Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **7.35** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **8.0** Cop Car Workshop **9.0** Cop Car Workshop **10.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **11.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Storage Hunters UK **1.30** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Robson's Extreme Fishing Challenge **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **6.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Richard Osman's House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **1.40** Room 101 **2.15** Room 101 **2.45** Room 101 **3.15** Room 101 **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** The Goldbergs **9.30** The Goldbergs **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Modern Family **8.0** Below Deck: Mediterranean **9.0** Celebs Go Dating **10.0** Rob Beckett's Big Hollyoaks Catch Up **10.05** Gogglebox **11.10** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.10** Rick and Morty **1.40** My Adventures With Superman **2.10** Celebs Go Dating **3.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.0** Modern Family **4.25** Modern Family **4.50** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA

Film4
11.0am FILM 23 Paces to Baker Street (1956) **1.10** FILM The Colditz Story (1954) **3.10** FILM The Fallen Idol (1948) **5.0** FILM Carry on Cabby (1963) **6.50** FILM The Devil Wears Prada (2006) **9.0** FILM French Exit (2020) **11.15** FILM Trading Places (1983) **1.30** FILM Blood Simple (1983)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Secret Crush **11.0** Secret Crush **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Wheel of Fortune **2.0** Celebrity Supermarket Sweep **3.0** Charmed **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Olivia Attwood's Bad Boyfriends **10.0** Family Guy **10.30** Family Guy **11.0** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30** Bob's Burgers **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.15** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.45** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max
6.0am DC's Legends of Tomorrow **7.0** SEAL Team **8.0** Supergirl **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **12.0** Supergirl **1.0** Magnum PI **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** SEAL Team **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh vs Heavy Metal **9.0** The Walking Dead: Dead City **10.0** The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon **11.05** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **11.45** The Walking Dead **12.45** Entourage **2.0** Funny Woman **3.0** Last King of the Cross **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Sky Arts Ambassador Bursary Shorts **6.10** André Rieu: Live in Vienna **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Charles Bronson **12.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2013: Painting Hilary Mantel **12.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs **3.0** Discovering: Peter O'Toole **4.0** Watercolour Challenge **5.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2014 **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Classic Movies: The Story of Murder on the Orient Express **9.0** Discovering: Samuel L Jackson **10.0** The Directors **11.0** Comedy Legends **12.0** A Brush With Comedy **2.0** Guy Garvey: From the Vaults **3.0** Offended By Irvine Welsh **4.0** Tales of the Unexpected **4.30** Auction: David Hockney Special **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

Sky Atlantic
6.0am The Guest Wing **7.55** Boardwalk Empire **10.0** Westworld **12.30** Game of Thrones **1.35** The Sopranos **3.55** Boardwalk Empire **6.0** Westworld **8.0** Game of Thrones **9.0** Succession **10.15** Yellowjackets **11.25** Euphoria **12.30** Winning Time**1.40** The Outsider **2.45** Game of Thrones **3.55** The Guest Wing


Blackbird, Channel 4

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. Another chance to hear last Saturday night's Prom concert featuring the Berliner Philharmoniker in Smetana's Má Vlast and R Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op 54. Plus, from the Schwarzenberg Schubertiade, soprano Erika Baikoff and pianist Joseph Middleton perform lieder by Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Bruckner (4/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** BBC Proms 2024: Prom 61. Simon Rattle conducts the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Adès's Aquifer and Bruckner's Symphony No 4 in E flat major, "Romantic". **10.0** Night Tracks (R) **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **9.0** Across the Red Line. The debate about transgender athletes in sport. (R) **9.30** Brood X (R) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** This Cultural Life. Opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa reveals her biggest influences. (2/18) **11.45** The Lowball Tapes (R) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.32** Sliced Bread. Do drinks made from "greens powders" do all they promise? (3/10) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** More Wow. Jo Marchant talks to historian Emily Baughan about losing her mother and having her first child, with four months between them. (4/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Stealing Shelley's Heart. Drama, by Hattie Naylor, written for the bicentenary of Shelley's death in July 1822. (R) **3.0** Open Country. Maggie Ayre takes a walk on the Hebridean Whale Trail on Mull. (5/13) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Access Sport (R) **3.30** Word of Mouth. Former astronaut Chris Hadfield on why words matter more than ever in space. (3/7) **4.0** The Briefing Room (9/16) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** **6.30** Phil Ellis Is Trying. Phil and Johnny embark on a fantastical tour of a soup factory. (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends (R) **9.45** NatureBang. Becky Ripley and Emily Knight examine why naked mole rats live so long. (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight. With Shaun Ley. **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The View from Castle Rock. By Alice Munro. (4/10) **11.0** The Today Podcast. The biggest news stories of the week. **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** The Lowball Tapes (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Paul Temple and the Lawrence Affair (8/8) **6.30** Killing Orders (2/6) **7.0** Coming Alive (3/6) **7.30** It Sticks Out Half a Mile **8.0** Paul Sinha's Citizenship Test (2/4) **8.30** The Rub of Time (4/5) **8.45** Letter to Louis (4/5) **9.0** Yesterday in Parliament **9.30** A Guide to Coastal Wildlife (4/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (6/8) **10.30** Turntable Tales (1/2) **11.0** Paul Temple and the Lawrence Affair (8/8) **11.30** Killing Orders (2/6) **12.0** Coming Alive (3/6) **12.30** It Sticks Out Half a Mile **1.0** Paul Sinha's Citizenship Test (2/4) **1.30** The Rub of Time (4/5) **1.45** Letter to Louis (4/5) **2.0** Dilemma (6/6) **2.30** No Commitments (5/6) **3.0** Put Out More Flags (3/3) **4.0** Great Lives (6/8) **4.30** Turntable Tales (1/2) **5.0** Paul Temple and the Lawrence Affair (8/8) **5.30** Killing Orders (2/6) **6.0** Coming Alive (3/6) **6.30** It Sticks Out Half a Mile **7.0** Paul Sinha's Citizenship Test (2/4) **7.30** The Rub of Time (4/5) **7.45** Letter to Louis (4/5) **8.0** Dilemma (6/6) **8.30** No Commitments (5/6) **9.0** Put Out More Flags (3/3) **10.0** Fresh from the Fringe (2/2) **10.30** John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme (3/6) **11.0** Alun Cochrane's Fun House (3/4) **11.30** Twenty Players (3/6) **11.45** Woof: True Tales of Romance and Failure (4/4) **12.0** Great Lives (6/8) **12.30** Turntable Tales (1/2) **1.0** Paul Temple and the Lawrence Affair (8/8) **1.30** Killing Orders (2/6) **2.0** Coming Alive (3/6) **2.30** It Sticks Out Half a Mile **3.0** Paul Sinha's Citizenship Test (2/4) **3.30** The Rub of Time (4/5) **3.45** Letter to Louis (4/5) **4.0** Dilemma (6/6) **4.30** No Commitments (5/6) **5.0** Put Out More Flags (3/3)

Puzzles

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER METAL HEART

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch



Solution no 16,952



Sudoku no 6,608

3	2	5	8	6	9	4	7	1
8	1	9	7	4	2	3	6	5
4	6	7	3	5	1	8	9	2
1	7	2	5	9	8	6	4	3
5	8	6	2	3	4	7	1	9
9	3	4	6	1	7	5	2	8
2	5	8	1	7	6	9	3	4
7	9	3	4	2	5	1	8	6
6	4	1	9	8	3	2	5	7

Word wheel

DRIFTWOOD

Suguru

1	5	3	2	1	3
4	2	1	4	5	4
5	3	5	2	3	1
2	1	4	1	5	2
3	5	3	2	3	1
1	2	4	1	4	2

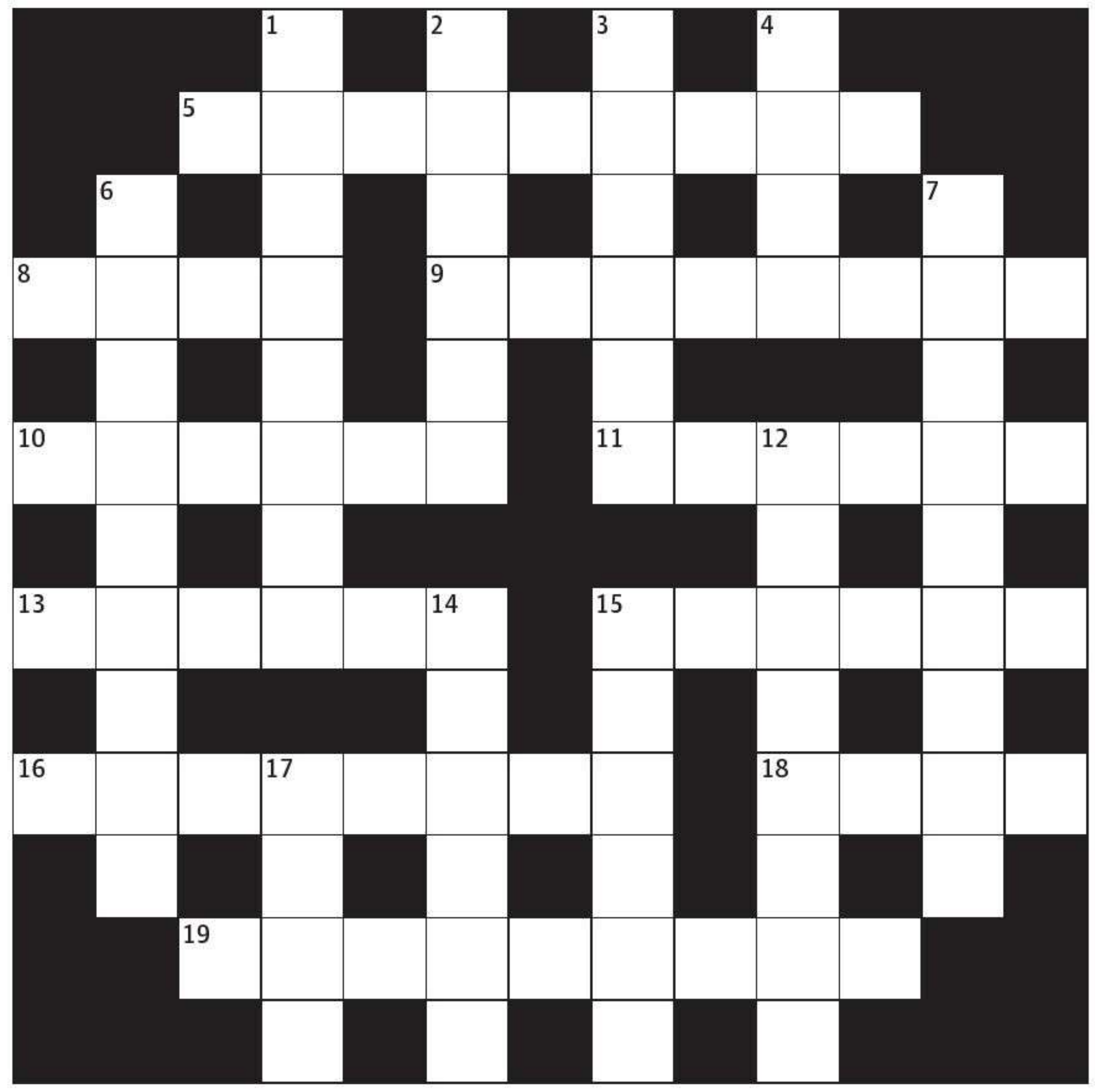
Quick crossword no 16,953

Across

5 Yardstick - measurer of atmospheric pressure (9)
8 Midwest US state (4)
9 Spain's third-largest city (8)
10 Human "tail"? (6)
11 Fracas (6)
13 1.5 litre bottle (6)
15 Hunted prey (6)
16 Counsel (8)
18 Fawn's "foot"? (4)
19 Elasticated hair-securing ring (9)

Down

1 Caribbean from Kingston? (8)
2 Curving out (6)
3 Militant (6)
4 Check (4)
6 Rogue - whose parent is a weapon? (3,2,1,3)
7 Where letters posted, to be sent (6-3)
12 Number one? (5,3)
14 Bloke's hairstyle, tied into round shape (3,3)
15 Slake (6)
17 Quacker (4)



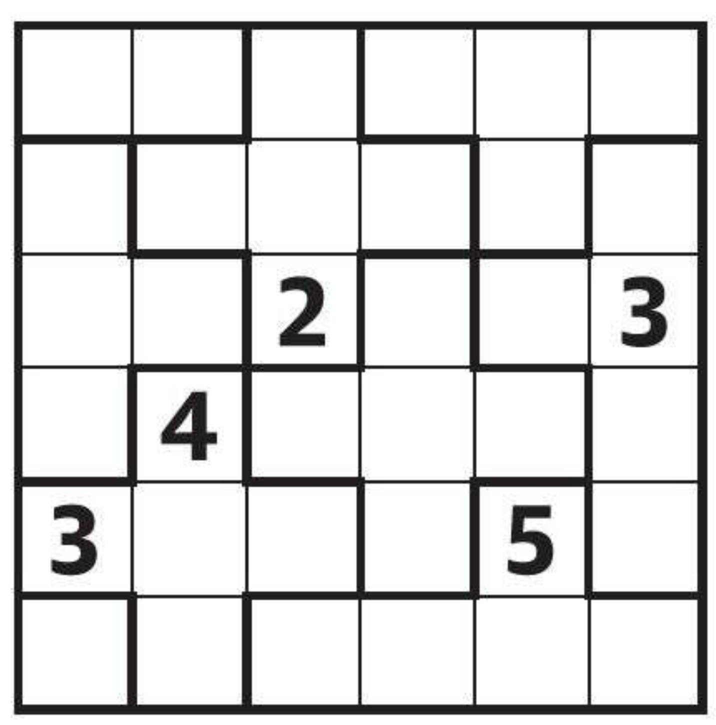
Sudoku no 6,609

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

	1						8	
			2		1			
		8	5		3	1		
4								5
			9		8			
		1		3		2		
		2		6		5		
6				9				8
	4	9	3		5	7	2	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.



Wordsearch

Can you find 15 dog breeds in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

D	B	L	Y	K	S	U	H	F
W	V	Z	E	E	C	S	D	F
R	B	K	N	R	P	E	N	I
U	E	R	D	I	G	A	E	T
P	A	T	T	I	I	N	S	S
I	G	Z	R	T	N	P	O	A
K	L	W	A	I	A	G	N	M
U	E	S	O	N	E	V	O	P
L	L	M	I	H	O	V	E	O
A	C	E	R	A	C	H	E	M
S	L	S	C	O	T	T	Y	R

Word wheel



Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-45. Good-38. Average-28.

Trivia corner

What is the name of the film co-written by the Irish author Paul Murray?
a. Metal Heart
b. Sing Street
c. Kneecap
d. Cavalry
Answer top right

